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GLADYS, THE REAPER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"SIMPLICITY AND FASCINATION."

". . . . standing like Ruth amid the alien corn."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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GLADYS, THE REAPER.

CHAPTER I.

THE NURSE.

Mrs. Prothero continued very ill, and the doctor said there was no chance of her amendment until her mind was more at ease. Four days had passed, and no intelligence of Netta. Each day found her worse than the preceding, and brain fever was apprehended. Gladys nursed her day and night. Mr. Prothero stormed and lamented by turns. Owen did what he could to assist and comfort all, and Miss Gwynne and Miss Hall sent every kind of nourishing food from the Park.

On the fifth morning, Owen rode into the

town in the vague hope that he should hear something of his sister, either through Mrs. Jenkins' servant or the post. Mrs. Jenkins had not returned, but there was a neat, smooth letter for his father, directed by Howel, with which he rode off homewards at full gallop. He longed to open it, but he dared not. He was fearful that his father would put it into the fire unread, so he formed twenty plans for securing it, which he knew he could not carry out; however, when he returned home and sought his father in the harvest-field, he said—

"Father, I have a letter directed by Howel. Will you let me open it for mother's sake?"

"If it is your's, do what you will with it; if it is mine, burn it unread."

"But, father, surely you would do something to save mother's life. Any news of Netta—"

"Don't name that girl to me, Sir, or I'll horsewhip you!"

"May I open the letter, father?"

"Do as you will, but don't let me see it. The deceitful upstart! the pompous fool! the—the—"

Owen waited for no more epithets but ran

into the house, and stumbling upon Gladys in the passage, told her to come and see what the letter contained. When he opened the outer envelope, and took out the beautiful little glossy note with its silver border and white seal, stamped with a small crest of an eagle, he burst out laughing.

"Cards, by jingo!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, Mr. Owen, just let me cut round the neat little seal. I am sure your mother would like to see it," said Gladys, joining involuntarily in the laugh, and taking a pair of scissors out of her pocket.

The seal was cut, and two cards were taken out, silver-lettered and silver-bordered, showing that Netta was now Mrs. Howel Jenkins.

Gladys ran off with them without asking any questions, followed by Owen. They found Mrs. Prothero crying, as she usually was when left alone.

"I hope we have good news, Ma'am," said Gladys.

"All right, mother. Cheer up! Netta is married at any rate," cried Owen.

"Thank God!" said Mrs. Prothero, taking

the cards and pressing them to her lips. "But not a line—not a word from Netta!"

"She would not dare to write, Ma'am," suggested Gladys.

"I suppose not; but why did she go away? Why did she leave me never to see me again?"

The following day brought the "Welshman," Mr. Prothero's weekly treat, which it generally took him the week thoroughly to read and enjoy.

Owen chanced to open it first, and, as is usually the case, stumbled at once upon the marriage of his sister. When his father came in, he was in uncontrollable fits of laughter.

"Don't be angry, father, but I can't help it. Ha, ha, ha! D. Prothero, Esq., of Glanaravon! Oh, I shall die of it! Now, really, father, you ought to be proud."

"What are you making such a row about?" said Mr. Prothero, looking over Owen's shoulder.

His eye caught the words, "Howel Jenkins, Esq., and Miss Prothero, Glanaravon, and Sir John Simpson." This was quite enough. He seized the paper with an oath, crumpled it up, and thrust it into the fire, and gave Owen such

a violent blow on the back with his fist, that the young man's first impulse was to start up and clench his in return ; however, his flush of passion cooled in a moment, and he said—

"Come, father ! remember it isn't I that ran away. Time enough to give me a licking when I do. I'm much obliged to you for letting me know what a strong father I've got."

"Once for all, Owen, take you care how you laugh upon that subject or name it to me. I can give and take a joke as well as most people, but not about that, Sir, and from you. Name o' goodness, what d'ye think I'm made of !"

The Farmer walked out of the hall, and left Owen heartily sorry for having hurt his father's feelings, but chuckling over the fashionable marriage.

The following morning he managed to procure another paper, and read his mother and Gladys the announcement, knowing full well that maternal pride must rejoice in the exaltation, whilst it wept over the disobedience, of an only daughter.

To the astonishment of every one, the following morning brought Mrs. Griffith Jenkins to

Glanaravon, attended by her maid-servant. Gladys answered the door to the thundering double-knock that resounded through the house, and was quite taken aback when she saw who the visitor was.

"Is Mrs. Prothero at home, young 'ooman?" asked Mrs. Jenkins, in a grand tone of voice.

"My mistress is very ill, Ma'am," said Gladys.

"Ill! since when?"

"Ever since Miss Netta left, Ma'am."

"Do Mr. Prothero be in the house, or Mr. Owen?"

"They are out harvesting, Ma'am."

"Tell you Mrs. Prothero that I do bring message from Mrs. Howel Jenkins for her, and that I was promising to give it myself."

Gladys did not know what to do. She felt sure that Mr. Prothero would not admit Mrs. Jenkins under his roof, and that her mistress would be afraid to do so; however, she ventured to ask her to come in and wait a little while whilst she sent for Mr. Owen. Fortunately, Owen was not far from the house, and Mr. Prothero was riding to some distant part of his

farm, so Gladys left Mrs. Jenkins to Owen, and went up-stairs to tell Mrs. Prothero that she was in the house. Mrs. Prothero was greatly agitated, but declared that she would see her at all risks, and tell her husband that she had done so. She begged Gladys to remain in the room during the visit, and to prevent a meeting between Mrs. Jenkins and Mr. Prothero.

Gladys went down stairs again, and found Owen telling Mrs. Jenkins what he thought of Howel's and her own conduct.

"My mistress would like to see you, Ma'am," said Gladys.

"I'm thinking I 'ont go near her now, you, Owen, have been so reude."

"Oh, for that much, you may do as you please, Aunt Lisbeth. I shall have the pleasure of going with you to my mother. You've pretty nearly killed her amongst you, and I don't mean to let her be quite put an end to."

"Will you be showing the way, young 'ooman," said Mrs. Jenkins, rising majestically, and smoothing down a very handsome silk dress, which she had carefully taken up before she sat down.

Owen's wrath was turned to amusement.

"Did you think we hadn't a duster in the house, Aunt? I can tell you you've pretty well dirtied that white petticoat."

Gladys led the way to Mrs. Prothero's room, and Mrs. Jenkins and Owen followed.

"I'm sorry to see you so poorly, cousin," said Mrs. Jenkins, approaching the bed on which Mrs. Prothero lay, looking flushed and excited.

"What did you expect, Lisabeth Jenkins? when you have carried off my daughter—my child—my Netta! And caused misery in our house never to be mended."

"Well, seure! One 'ould think we'd murdered Netta, 'stead of making her as grand as a queen, with a lord and a lady to be giving her away, and a captain to be at the wedding, and a gentleman in a waistcoat, and chains, and rings that do be worth a hundred pound at least, and a young lady for bridesmaid in a shoall of lace, handsomer than your Miss Gwynne, of the Park, and a wedding-cake covered with sugar, and silver, and little angels, and all sorts of things which I was bringing

with me for you; and a clergy like a bishop to marry her, and a coach and horses to be taking her back and fore, and she looking as beauty and happy as ever I was seeing! And my Howel's as rich and fine as anybody in London, Prince Albert nothing to him, and might be marrying Miss Simpson, my ladyship's doter if he wasn't so fullish as to be marrying your Netta!"

"Now, aunt, it is our turn, if you please," said Owen, as soon as Mrs. Jenkins gave him time to speak. "Will you tell my mother Netta's message?"

"I am taking it very unkind that you should all turn upon me. David Prothero I 'spected 'ould be in a passion, but, stim odds! Netta said, cousin, that I wos to tell you she was sorry to be leaving you in a hurry, but that she had everything she could be wishing, gowns, and white shoes, and lace veils—seure you never wos seeing such a beauty—and a *stafell—trosy* they do call it in London—good enough for my Lady Nugent, and a goold watch and chains, and rings and bracelets, ach un wyr! there's grand!"

"But what did Netta say to me, cousin Lisbeth? I don't care if she was all gold from head to foot. I would rather have her here in rags," said Mrs. Prothero, bursting afresh into tears.

"She's more likely to be here in satins and velvets, cousin," said Mrs. Jenkins, rising from her seat, and walking up and down, apparently in great wrath. "What you think of my Howels and your Netta at Abertewey! And you to be all toalking as if we wos all dirt. And they in France, over the sea, where I 'ould be going with them only I am so 'fraid of the water."

"There's a loss it would be, Aunt Lisbeth, if anything had happened to you! Suppose a shark had swallowed you up! gold watch, mourning ring, silk gown, brooch, and all? Those creatures aren't particular. But we haven't had all Netta's message yet."

"She was sending her kind love and duty to you, cousin, and was saying she was sorry to be leaving you, but my Howels was so kind as you, and she was as happy as could be."

"Did she cry, cousin, did she shed one

tear?" asked Mrs. Prothero, sitting up in bed, and looking at Mrs. Jenkins with a quick, wild eye, quite unlike her usual quiet glance.

"You needn't be looking at me so fierce, cousin, I didn't be killing Netta. Is seure—she did cry enough, if that's a pleasure to you. She was crying when she was meeting my Howels, she was crying when she was putting on her wedding gown, she was crying when the parson was preaching that sermon, and when the thunder and lightning did frighten her, seure, and no wonder—"

"Did it thunder and lighten when they were married?" asked Mrs. Prothero, through her sobs.

"Yes, indeet! I thoate I should be struck myself; but she was soon forgetting it at breakfast; they do call it breakfast, you see, but I never was seeing a grander dinner. Chickens, and tongue, and ham, and meats, and cakes, and jellies, and fruit, and wines, all froathing up like new milk, some sort of *pain* they was calling it, but I never did be seeing such good *pain* or tasting it before, he! he!"

"I don't care about the dress or the dinner, or the grand people, cousin," said Mrs. Prothero, "I pray God to forgive Howel for making our only girl run away from us like a thief in the night; and I would rather hear she cried for us whom she treated so badly, than that she was dressed in velvet and jewels. All those fine people and fine things won't make her happy, and her father will never forgive her, never. Oh dear! oh dear!"

"What will I tell her, Mrs. Prothero, when I do write to my son, Howels?"

"Tell her—tell her that my heart is breaking; but I forgive her. Beg her not to forget her parents, and, above all, not to forget her God. Poor child! poor silly, thoughtless child, she will never be happy again."

"Indeet to goodness, this is fullish! I shall go, Mrs. Prothero. Good morning."

Just as Mrs. Jenkins was making a kind of curtsey by the bedside, Gladys said that she saw Mr. Prothero riding up to the house.

"Perhaps you had better make haste, Aunt 'Lisbeth," said Owen, "it would not very well do for you and my father to meet."

"I 'ont be running away from any man's house, Mr. Owen. I do hope I'm as good as your father any day."

"Oh, pray make haste," said Mrs. Prothero, very much frightened. "Good bye, cousin. Forgive me if I have been rude; I beg your pardon."

"This way, Ma'am, if you please," said Gladys, opening the door; but Mrs. Jenkins was smoothing down her silk dress, and arranging her bonnet in the looking glass.

"Quite ready for another husband, aunt; but you had better make haste, you don't know what you may come in for if you meet my father."

"I am not caring neither," said the little woman, sweeping across the room, and out at the door. At the top of the stairs she met Mr. Prothero, face to face. The effect of her appearance upon that worthy man is not to be described. She made a kind of curtsey and began to speak, but no sooner did she see his face than she held her tongue. Neither did words appear to come at the Farmer's

bidding, but very decided deeds did. He took the alarmed Mrs. Jenkins by the two shoulders, literally lifted her from the ground, carried her down stairs a great deal faster than she came up, helped her along the passage much in the same way, and with something very nearly approaching a kick and an oath, turned her out of doors, and shut the door behind her with so violent a bang that it echoed through the house.

Owen ran down stairs to receive the first brunt of his passion, and to prevent his going up to his mother. He allowed the words that came at last to have way, and then took all the fault on himself; said that he had admitted Mrs. Jenkins to try to soothe his mother, and that she had done so, he thought.

"Take you care, Sir, how you let that 'ooman darken my doors again, or any one belonging to her. It'll be worse for you than for them," said Mr. Prothero, with a brow like a thunder cloud.

His wrath was interrupted by the sound of wheels, and to Owen's great relief, he saw the head of his uncle's well known grey mare

through the window. He ran out to admit his uncle and aunt.

"We have just seen Mrs. Jenkins, Owen," began his aunt.

"Not a word to father, aunt."

"Very well. But she stopped us and began telling us that she had been turned out of these doors, and would have the law on your father. She was furious; talked of Netta and Howel, and your mother, and Paris, and the wedding, all in the same breath, and would not let us go on until we had heard all. Neither of us spoke to her, but she stood at the horse's head and frightened me to death."

When they all went into the hall, they found that Mr. Prothero was not there. Gladys came in and said he was with her mistress, but had not mentioned Mrs. Jenkins.

"I am afraid she has made my mistress worse, Sir," she said to Owen "She has been very faint ever since she left."

In truth she had made her worse, and when Dr. Richards came to see her that afternoon, she was quite delirious. He shook his head, and declared that she had brain fever, and that the

utmost quiet and freedom from all excitement were necessary for her. Poor Mr. Prothero was beside himself, and the whole household were in great consternation. Serious illness had never visited either the farm or the vicarage before, and none of the Prothero family knew what it was. Not so Gladys, however. She did not wait to be directed or ordered, but took her post as nurse by her dear mistress's bedside. To her the doctor gave his directions, to her Mr. Prothero turned for information, to her Owen came for comfort; and even Mrs. Jonathan, who had scarcely ever spoken to her before, looked to her as the only hope in this time of uncertainty.

"I have seen all kinds of fevers," she would say to one and another as they questioned her, "worse than this, and with God's grace the dear mistress will recover. I am not afraid to sit up alone with her, oh! no. It is better not to have too many in the room at once. Do not be uneasy, master, the delirium is not very bad. Yes, Mr. Owen, you can do better than any one else, because you are calmer. No, Ma'am, it is not an infectious fever—you need

not be afraid," and so from one to another at intervals she went giving hope and comfort.

During all that night and several successive ones, Gladys sat up with her beloved mistress. It was she who listened to her disturbed, delirious talk about Netta, and tried to console her; she who read the Bible to her, and prayed with and for her during the intervals of reason, and she who gave her all her medicines and nourishment.

Poor Mr. Prothero could do nothing but wander from the fields to the house, and the house back again to the fields, followed by his brother like his shadow, who strove to comfort him in vain. Mrs. Jonathan made jellies, and did her best. Owen was gentle and tender as a girl, and helped to nurse his mother with a love and care that Gladys could scarcely understand in the light-hearted, wild sailor.

Before the end of the week, they wrote to summon Rowland, for Mrs. Prothero's life was despaired of, and great was the anxiety and terror of all, lest he should come too late.

"Pray for her, Mr. Owen, pray for her. There is nothing else of any avail at such a

time as this," would Gladys say in answer to the young man's entreating glance.

"If I were as good as you, I could, Gladys. Oh, God! spare my beloved mother!" he would reply.

CHAPTER II.

THE CURATE.

ALTHOUGH it was a bright autumn morning, the stillness of death hovered over Glanaravon Farm. There was scarcely a sound to be heard within or without. The men in the yard moved about like spectres, and work was suspended in the harvest fields; whispers circulated from bed-room to kitchen, and from kitchen to out-house, that the good and kind mistress whom every body loved, was on her deathbed; and how should they labour? All the talk of the farm-servants was upon subjects ominous of death. One said that he had heard Lion, the big watch-dog, howl long and loud, before day-light; another that he had seen a corpse candle

as he went homeward the previous evening; a third that she had seen her mistress all in white at her bedside, looking beautiful; a fourth that she had heard a raven croak; in short, if signs and wonders could kill poor Mrs. Prothero, there was little chance for her life. Where every one was usually so busy, so full of energy and spirit, there was more than a Sabbath calm. They were expecting some one, too, for Tom and Bill were looking down the road about every five minutes, whilst Shanno appeared now and again at the back door, and whispered "Is he coming?" to which a shake of the head was the constant reply.

The doctor had just gone into the house, and knots of men and women stood about with sorrowful faces; kind neighbours who came one after another to hear the last report as soon as he should again re-appear. Mrs. Prothero was greatly beloved, and no one could afford to lose her.

"She was so bad last night that she was not expected to see the morning," whispered one.

"Couldn't take a drop of anything," said another.

"Is talking of Miss Netta for ever," said a third.

"There'll be a loss to every one. Mr. Jonathan prayed for her in church last Sunday; if prayers 'll save her she 'ont die, no, seure."

"She gave me a jug of milk only Friday week."

"And was coming to see my John in the measles Wednesday before Miss Netta ran away."

"She's the death of her mother I'll always say."

"Poor master is nearly mad."

"And Mr. Owen crying like a baby."

"And they do say that the Irish girl is better than a daughter to 'em all."

"Hush! I do hear wheels. Oh! if he do come, perhaps he may rouse her up a bit."

The gates were open, and before the last whisper was over Mr. Gwynne's carriage was driving down to the farm. The bystanders drew back as it rolled through a part of the yard and stopped at the door. Rowland got out, and was in the house almost before any one could see him. He went into the hall, and there he saw Miss

Gwynne, Miss Hall, and Dr. Richards. Miss Gwynne held out her hand and said at once,

"Your mother is still alive."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Rowland, giving a sort of convulsive gasp, and wringing the hand that pressed his.

"Is there any hope?" he asked of Doctor Richards.

"The crisis is at hand, and she is insensible; it is impossible to say—if we could rouse her!"

"I may go up-stairs?"

"Yes, but you had better let your father know you are come, he is in the outer-room."

Rowland went at once to what had been his own bed-room in former times; he opened the door gently, and there alone on his knees by the bed-side, groaning audibly, was his poor stricken father. He went up softly to him and whispered, "Father, it is I, Rowland!" and Mr. Prothero rose, and in a few seconds went with him into the room where the beloved wife and mother lay.

Rowland went up to the bed-side, and took the place which Gladys silently vacated for him. He gazed upon what appeared to him to be death, but was really the prostration and insen-

sibility that followed the delirium and fever of the past week. He bent down and kissed the cold forehead of his mother, then turned away, covered his face with his hands, and wept silently. Gladys whispered to him that there was still hope, and resumed her occupation of bathing the temples with vinegar, wetting the lips with wine, and administering tea-spoonsful of wine, which still continued to find a passage down the throat. Mrs. Jonathan Prothero crept softly up to Rowland, and put her hand in his—Owen came to him—his uncle—all were there.

But as soon as he had recovered from his temporary emotion, he went to his father's side who had seated himself on a chair behind the curtain of the bed, and tried to comfort him. The presence of his second son was, in itself, a consolation to poor Mr. Prothero ; but he could not listen to his words.

"Pray for your mother, Rowland," was all he could say.

Rowland knelt down with all those present, except Gladys, who joined in spirit and prayed. Never before had he known what it was to use

the prayers of his church for one so dear to him; never before had he felt the great difficulty of reading them when his emotion nearly choked his utterance. But, as priest and son he prayed fervently for his mother.

Mr. Prothero seemed calmer after he rose from his knees, and ventured to lean over his wife, to assure himself that she still breathed. There was an occasional slight pulsation scarcely to be called breath.

The doctor came in, and felt her pulse. It was not quite gone, and whilst there was life there was hope.

They stood round her bed, watching the calm, pale face with a love and anxiety so intense, that they could neither speak nor breathe. Gladys looked almost as pale as her mistress, and as the light fell upon her when she was leaning over her, she might have been the angel of death herself.

Mrs. Jonathan Prothero drew Rowland from the room, and insisted upon his taking some refreshment. He had travelled all night, and Mr. Gwynne at his daughter's request, had sent his carriage to meet him.

Miss Gwynne and Miss Hall were still waiting down stairs. They asked Mrs. Jonathan if they could be of any use in taking Gladys' place whilst the poor girl got some rest; Mrs. Jonathan said that it was useless to urge her to leave her mistress for a moment.

Rowland thanked Miss Gwynne for her kindness, and she said she would do anything in the world for Mrs. Prothero.

She and Miss Hall went away in the carriage that brought Rowland, promising to return again in the afternoon.

When Rowland had swallowed some coffee, he went back to his mother's room. As he walked from the door to the foot of the bed, she opened her eyes, and seemed for a moment to look at him; a thrill of hope shot through him. He went round and took her hand, and whispered, "Mother!" Did she smile? he thought she did.

Shortly afterwards her lips moved, and Gladys heard the name ever on them, "Netta." This was better, far better than that death-like trance.

"Mother, dear mother," again whispered

Rowland ; and once more her eyes opened and fixed on him, with something like consciousness.

At last an opiate which the doctor had given, took effect, and she slept; her pulse was so weak, and her breathing so faint, that at first the watchers thought she was passing away into that sleep from which there is no awakening ; but it was not so. It was a weak troubled sleep ; still it was a sleep.

By degrees all left the room but Rowland and Gladys. Mrs. Prothero's hand seemed to be clasping that of her son, as if it would not let it go; and Gladys never moved from the bedside.

She saw that there must be hope if real sleep came. As she sat down in a kind of easy chair that Owen had placed for her by the bed-side, she thanked God for this amount of hope.

"Sleep, Gladys, I will watch," whispered Rowland.

And truly the poor girl had need of rest. Scarce had she closed her eyes during that anxious week, and she knew well, how necessary rest was to her. But she felt as if she could not

sleep whilst this uncertainty lasted. All the anxious faces of the household flitted before her, when she tried to compose herself. Her poor master, his brother, Mrs. Jonathan, Rowland, but mostly Owen. He who had said the least, had shown the greatest self-command and done the most. His large kind eyes seemed to be looking at his mother or at her, and trying to anticipate their wants. His hands so brown and sinewy, yet so very gentle, seemed to be touching hers, as they had done when moving his mother, or otherwise helping in the sick-room. His cheery voice seemed to be telling her not to weary herself so much, or to be thanking her for the care she bestowed upon his dear parent. In vain she tried to put aside this kind of haunting vision. Her mistress and Owen were painted on the over-strained retina, and she could not efface the picture. She prayed for them, for all. Then, as the afternoon sunlight faded away, and a twilight hue crept over the room, with just a flickering streak of light playing on the wall opposite to her, the deathbeds of her father, mother, sister, and brothers rose up before her with a vivid reality that made

her tremble, and forced tears from her weary eyes. The tears seemed a relief, and as they flowed quietly down her cheeks, and the coming-shadows dispersed, the visions of the living, dying, and dead faded away, a mist fell on her eyes, and she slept.

Rowland, meanwhile watched his mother. During the twelve months that he had been a curate in a parish in one of the worst parts of London, he had seen much of the sick and the dying. He had seen poverty, wretchedness, and sin in their most dreadful aspects, and the peace and comfort of his mother's present condition were a great contrast to the riot and squalor of many a death-room into which he had sought to carry the gospel message of mercy. Truly he felt thankful in his inmost soul that she, over whom he was watching with filial love, was ready at any moment to appear before the great Tribunal, because she "believed and knew in whom she believed." It was for Netta, his beloved and wayward sister, the cause of this first great family trouble that he grieved the most, because he feared that she had entered upon that downward path that would lead her far

astray from the one in which her mother had so long and happily trod. But he, too, knew where to apply in all his times of doubt and misgiving, and thither he went for comfort, as the shadows fell around and night crept on.

Mrs. Jonathan Prothero came noiselessly into the room, bringing in a shaded night-light, and anxious to bear some intelligence to the watchers down-stairs. Her step, light as it was, awoke Gladys. She started up, and looking on her mistress, clasped her hands, and fervently thanked God.

"She is sleeping as calmly as a child," she said. "I am sure the worst is past."

Mrs. Jonathan went out to tell the good news, and to beg the brothers to go to bed, which they did, after some demur. Gladys and Rowland watched on for about an hour longer, when Mrs. Prothero opened her eyes and fixed them upon Rowland. She smiled as if she knew him, and when he bent over her and kissed her, murmured some faint words which he could not understand.

Gladys gave her some jelly which she swallowed, and soon afterwards she slept again.

"The crisis is over, she will recover I hope, Mr. Rowland," said Gladys. "You can go to bed, Sir—you had better. The mistress will want you to-morrow, and you can be of no use to-night."

Rowland felt the force of this, and again kissing his mother's forehead, and shaking Gladys by the hand, he went down-stairs to Owen, who he found asleep on the sofa in the parlour. Supper was awaiting him, and Owen and he were soon seated over the fire, discussing their mother's illness and Netta's conduct.

They had not met for three or four years, and there was much to say. Few brothers loved one another more tenderly than they did, despite the dissimilarity of habits, tastes and occupations, and when they were together, all the secrets of their hearts were usually unfolded. Although Owen's wild, roving nature had caused Rowland much anxiety, still he had perfect confidence in his honest, open character. Owing to early education Owen was not deficient in general acquirements. He knew a little Latin and Greek, and could read, write and cypher well. Added to this, his knowledge of foreign lands

was great, and of men and manners greater. Under a careless exterior, he had a considerable portion of talent and information, and Rowland was delighted to find in his sea-faring, rosytering brother, a much more cultivated and sensible mind than he had expected. Rowland was beginning to be conscious of wishing to see all his family superior to what they were. Placed by his own profession amongst gentlefolks, and feeling in himself all the refinement of the class so called, he was often annoyed and pained to be differently situated from those who were nearest and dearest to him. He knew that in London he was received as an equal by men and women of rank and position, as well as by those of talent and learning; whereas, in the country, even Miss Gwynne, at whose house he visited, considered it a condescension to speak to him, whilst she looked upon those who belonged to him as people of another sphere. In spite of all his prayers for humility, and his striving after pure christianity, Rowland was, and knew that he was a proud man, and all the prouder because his original station was beneath his present one. He felt that he must be

humbled before he could be the pastor and disciple of One whose whole life was a lesson of humility. But the world knew nothing of this. He walked before it, and through it as a bright example of a young clergyman, devoted to his work. Neither was he less devoted to his mother, dutiful to his father, or loving to his brother, because they were good, honest, plain farmers, and he a London curate; or which was, perhaps, more to the point, because Miss Gwynne could not, or would not separate him from his family.

When he and his brother and sister were children, they were constantly at the Vicarage with their uncle and aunt, and Miss Gwynne was their playmate there, and had not known their inferiority. Now that he really was a man of education and a gentleman, in spite of all her kindness to his mother, she knew it full well. Why did he never consider what any one else in his own neighbourhood thought of him or his family? It was only Miss Gwynne—always Miss Gwynne.

Early the following morning, that young lady came to enquire for Mrs. Prothero, accompanied

by Miss Hall. It was Rowland who gave them the joyful intelligence that his mother had had a good night, and was much more quiet. The real pleasure that shone from Miss Gwynne's intelligent and intelligible eyes, showed Rowland how fond she was of his mother.

"And now," she said, "Miss Hall and I are come, resolutely bent on remaining with your mother, whilst your aunt and Gladys go to bed. We are quite determined, and you know I always have my way."

Rowland bowed, smiled, and called his aunt, who, after some hesitation consented, and went up stairs to request Gladys to do the same, but Gladys was inexorable until Mr. Prothero came in, and in his most decided manner insisted on her taking some rest. Mrs. Prothero also murmured a "Go, Gladys fach!" and she kissed the dear cheek and went at once.

Mr. Prothero took her place. He was alone with his wife, and the rough, loud man became gentle as one of his own lambs, as he bent over her and thanked God that she was better. A big tear fell from his eyes on her face, and he made an inward vow that if her life were spared,

he would never again say a cross word to her as long as he lived.

She felt the tear, heard the kind words, and seemed to understand the vow, for she looked at him tenderly, and said in her low, weak voice, "God bless you, David!"

From that moment he went out to his work with a lightened heart; the labourers read the good news that their mistress was better in his face, and heard it in his voice. Even Netta's disobedience was forgotten, if not forgiven, in the joy of feeling that the partner of more than half his life was likely to recover. And by degrees, she did recover. That is to say, before Rowland was obliged again to leave her, she was able to go down into the parlour, and sit at her work, "quite like a lady," as she expressed it. And even out of the evil of such an illness good had sprung. It had aroused all the sympathy and kind feeling of relatives, friends, and neighbours; but especially had it been beneficial in bringing out the womanly kindness that lay hid under the stiffness of pride in Mrs. Jonathan Prothero, and in opening the hearts of the sisters-in-law towards each other. Mrs. Jonathan forgot her

cousin, Sir Philip Payne Perry, and helped to nurse, and learned to love her humbler connection—whilst the ever-ready tenderness of the simple farmer's wife, sprung up to respond to it like a stream leaping in the sunlight. Gladys, too, reaped the reward of her devotion, in the increased kindness of Mr. Prothero, who began to forget the Irish beggar in the gentle girl whose care, under God, had saved his wife's life; and so, as is usually the case, affliction had not come from the ground, but had fallen like a softening dew upon the irritated feelings of the afflicted, and bound heart still nearer to heart.

Perhaps in the younger and more impetuous natures it had done almost too much. Thoughtless of consequences, they had all worked to save a life, valuable to so many. Rowland, Owen, Miss Gwynne, Miss Hall, Gladys, had been thrown together at a time when the formalities of the world, and the distinctions of rank are forgotten; and the tear of sympathy, the word of friendly comfort, or the pressure of the hand of kindly feeling are given and taken,

without a thought of who may be the giver or receiver. But they are remembered, and dwelt upon in after years as passages in life's history, never to be obliterated—never to be forgotten.

CHAPTER III.

THE HEIRESS.

Glanaravon Park lay, as we have said, in the parish of which Mr. Jonathan Prothero was vicar, but as the parish and park were large, the house was three or four miles from the church; and it was on account of this distance of Glanaravon and its dependencies from church and school, that Miss Gwynne had induced her father to build the school-house, of which mention has been already made, since there was a large school in the village for such children as were within its reach. She would have had him build a small church also, and endow it, to remove all excuse, as she said, from the chapel-goers, but this was an undertaking too mighty for him. However, the school flourished won-

derfully, both on week days and Sundays; and Miss Gwynne always filled every corner of an omnibus in which the servants went to church, with such of the children as could not walk so far. Miss Hall was an admirable assistant to the school-mistress during the week; and Gladys, with Mrs. Prothero's permission, undertook the Sunday duty for the mistress, in order that she might have a holiday on that day. Miss Gwynne also attended, but she was too impatient and imperious to be a good teacher, much as she wished to be one.

Miss Gwynne had great ideas of doing good: grand schemes that she tried to carry out, but in which she often failed. Nevertheless, she did a great deal of good in her own peculiar way.

She had been reading of the "harvest homes" that they were endeavouring to revive in England, and had induced her father to have one in the Park. Happily, the day fixed for this general rejoicing was during Mrs. Prothero's convalescence, and before Rowland's return to London; so that most of the members of the Prothero family could be present. They also

yielded Miss Gwynne ready assistance in such preparations as she made, and were the instruments in surprising her and her father by some tasteful decorations in their honour, unknown to them. Owen and Gladys worked very hard at floral and evergreen mottoes for the tent, whilst Rowland gave his advice as he sat with his mother, and tried to amuse her during the tedium of her recovery.

A few hours before the general gathering, a messenger arrived at the Park in great haste, bearing a note to Miss Gwynne, containing the information that the Vicar had sprained his ancle just as he was going to set out for Glanaravon, and was unable to move. There was another note for Rowland, which was to be carried on to the Farm, requesting him to supply his uncle's place.

Miss Gwynne was greatly annoyed; wished that the Vicar would not go wandering about after old stones, as she was sure he had done; knew that Rowland would never be able to manage, and was very sorry she had attempted the treat at all.

Whilst she was still grumbling, and Miss

Hall laughing and consoling, Rowland arrived. This was his first visit to the Park since he had been in the country, and Mr. Gwynne was delighted to see him. He perceived at once that Miss Gwynne's equanimity was disturbed; and said that he was very sorry to come as a substitute for his uncle, but that he would do his best. His manner was so quiet and composed, and he seemed so little alarmed by the honours thrust upon him, that Miss Gwynne gradually became reassured.

In less than half-an-hour she told Miss Hall that he was worth a hundred of the Vicar, and that after all the sprained ancle was rather a fortunate accident.

At about two o'clock the guests began to assemble at the schcol-house, over the door of which was the motto in dahlias on a ground of evergreens, "Welcome for all," which had been arranged by Miss Hall. The school-room was very tastefully decorated by the mistress, Gladys, and the children; and the motto, "Long Live Miss Gwynne," was very apparent in scarlet letters amongst a crown of laurels.

All the children and their teachers were as-

sembled here, and a great many of their relations, also most of the farmers and their families. In addition, there were Mr. and Miss Gwynne, Miss Hall, Lady Mary and Miss Nugent, Colonel Vaughan, who was staying at the Park, Sir Hugh Pryse, Mrs. Jonathan Prothero, who left her husband at his particular request, and Rowland. No one out of the precincts of the Park had been invited, and as it was, there was a goodly number.

As there was no church near enough for them to go to, Rowland read the evening service in the school-room ; after this, he gave out one of the hymns for harvest, and led the youthful band in singing it. His fine, clear voice seemed to give the children courage, especially when a beautiful, full treble joined, to which they were evidently accustomed. It was impossible not to try to discover from whom those sweet notes proceeded, and one by one everybody looked at Gladys, who had a magnificent voice ; she, however, was unconscious of observation, for her eyes were fixed on her hymn-book that she was sharing with a small child.

It must be acknowledged that she not un-

frequently distracted the attention of many a young man from his hymn-book on Sunday, when at church; and on the present occasion, what with the face and the voice, more than one pair of eyes were fixed on her. Owen, I am sorry to say, looked more attentively at her than at his book; and, as to Colonel Vaughan, he never took his eyes off her face, and was heard to whisper the question of "Who is that girl?" to Lady Mary Nugent.

When the hymn was sung, Rowland stood behind the high desk of the mistress, and gave a short lecture on the words "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness." Rowland was not ungifted with the talent for extempore preaching, common to so many of his countrymen, and therewith possessed, in general, much self-possession; on the present occasion, it must be confessed that he felt unusually nervous, still he commanded himself and his feelings, and by degrees, forgetting them and his hearers, in his subject, warmed into a natural flow of eloquence that somewhat astonished his congregation, and entirely gained their attention.

Beneath a quiet exterior, Rowland hid a ro-

mantic and poetic mind, which few, if any of his friends knew anything about; for he had never shown his poetry to them, and never attempted to publish it. But it sometimes appeared in spite of his efforts to repress it in his sermons; and now it made a desperate effort to burst forth and conquered.

There was so much to excite the enthusiasm of a young preacher in that harvest-home gathering—in the mows of golden-corn heaped up against the future—in the splendid autumn weather they were then enjoying—in the bright sunshine and many hued leaves of the changing trees—and the goodness of God crowning the whole!

I am not going through his sermon, for I should only mar what his feelings made powerful. Suffice it to say, that some of his friends had tears in their eyes as he preached; others, according to the custom of their country, uttered occasional exclamations of approval as he went on, and some were glad to own him as their near and dear relation.

Perhaps the proudest moment of the Farmer's life, was when Mr. Gwynne went up to him after

that short discourse, and shook him by the hand, with the words—emphatic words for him.

"Well, Prothero, I congratulate you upon your son. You have reason to be proud of him. He managed his sermon well at a short notice, clear, poetical, &c., and all that sort of thing."

The abrupt termination to the speech was occasioned by the approach of Lady Mary Nugent, who also congratulated Mr. Prothero.

"Thank you, Sir; thank your Ladyship; glad you approve," was all the proud father could say, with the tears in his eyes all the while.

As to Rowland, he was undergoing an ovation of hand-shakings and praises from everybody present, which he was fain to put an end to, by beginning to organize the procession to the tent. One simple sentence, however, rang in his ears for the remainder of that day.

"Thank you, Mr. Rowland, for your sermon. I hope you have done us all good," said Miss Gwynne.

She began to think more highly of him than she had ever thought before, and owned to

Miss Hall that he had words at command, and that at a short notice.

The procession was very pretty. The school-children walked two and two, and looked like so many large scarlet poppies, as they wended their way through the avenue. Miss Gwynne gave them all their outer garments, and it was her picturesque and pleasing fancy to keep to the national costume; so they had high-crowned black beaver-hats; scarlet-cloaks with hoods; striped linsey-frocks, and woollen aprons. They carried a due amount of little flags with appropriate mottoes, and some few of the Glanaravon musicians formed a band for the occasion, and played cheerily, "The March of the Men of Harlech."

Mr. Prothero and his son Owen headed the tenantry, and carried between them a magnificent banner, fashioned at the farm, bearing as motto—"Prosperity to Glanaravon." Others followed with appropriate Welsh mottoes. And one was conspicuous as containing the sentiment—"Long live our Vicar and Lady."

A large tent was erected in front of the house, ornamented with flowers, wreaths of

evergreens, devices and mottoes. The most conspicuous of these was in Welsh, and above Mr. Gwynne's seat at the head of the long-table. It was composed of wheat-ears and oak-leaves, and contained the words—"May God bless Gwynne of Glanaravon and his daughter." Mr. Gwynne felt almost uncomfortable in seating himself beneath such a sentence, but having consented for the first time in his life, and he earnestly hoped, for the last, to become a hero, he knew he must go through with it. Accordingly, with Colonel Vaughan on his left, and Lady Mary Nugent on his right hand, he prepared to do the honours of a most substantial feast to his tenantry, their wives and children. When every one was seated, Rowland said grace, and they began the feast *con amore*. They were as merry and happy a party as could be assembled on a fine autumn day. Every one was in good humour, and thoroughly enjoyed the treat. As soon as they had feasted enough, they proceeded to give toasts, which were enthusiastically drunk in good Welsh ale.

Mr. Gwynne proposed the health of the Queen and royal family. Sir Hugh proposed

Mr. Gwynne and his daughter, the kind and liberal donors of the feast, in a hearty speech, which all understood. Mr. Gwynne did his best to return thanks, but found that he could not get much beyond—"I feel most grateful for the honour you have done me, but—my feelings—been—and—and—all that sort of thing," at which point the cheers grew so deafening that he sat down quite overwhelmed, and wished himself in his library.

"So very exciting, so complimentary, so touching," whispered Lady Mary Nugent to Mr. Gwynne.

Rowland was again called upon to exert his eloquence in responding for the Church, which he did in a short, apt speech, duly applauded.

He, in return, proposed the Army, coupled with Colonel Vaughan, who—and, he said, he knew he was expressing the thoughts of all present—was heartily welcomed home, and earnestly desired to remain in his native country.

Colonel Vaughan delighted every one by a most eloquent response. "Such a grand gentle-

man, but so humble," was the general opinion of him. As for the ladies, they were all in love with him. Lady Mary Nugent, Freda, Miss Nugent—they had never seen so charming a man. And he was so universally gallant that he might have been in love with them all in return. He gave the "Welsh Yeomanry," for whom Mr. Prothero returned thanks, and right well he did it; giving the Colonel to understand in something more than a hint, that if he wished the farmers and farming to improve, he, and other absent landlords, must come and live on their property as Mr. Gwynne did, and then there would be more wealth and prosperity, and more "Harvest Homes."

And so, with various other toasts, including the Vicar and his lady, for whom Owen had to return thanks, the afternoon wore on. The children were playing at games in the Park, and by degrees the elders joined them.

Here Gladys was foremost. It was wonderful to see how she had gained the affections of the young. One and all were round her, and when the gentlemen and ladies came to look on, and join in the revels, the first thing

that attracted them was the flushed face and graceful figure of this really beautiful girl, as she led the boisterous youngsters in a game of "thread the needle."

In a moment, Colonel Vaughan was in the ring, heading the boys; but Gladys immediately retired, abashed, as he stood opposite to her, as captain on the French side. But Owen came to the rescue, and the gallant officer and equally gallant sailor, headed the ranks, as commanders of the bands of French and English. They had a hard fight on both sides, but at last the English conquered, and Owen and his party won the day amidst great cheering.

Sir Hugh and Rowland joined in the succeeding games; and sixpences, sweetmeats, apples, and every available prize was given to the boys and girls for racing, jumping, singing, and the like, until the shades of evening fell over the scene.

Lady Mary Nugent and her daughter were the first to wish good night; as they were to walk home, Colonel Vaughan proposed accompanying them.

"You will return at once?" asked Freda, rather peremptorily, for she disliked that the Nugents should carry off the all-fascinating Colonel.

He bowed and said "yes," and Rowland, who was near, saw Freda's cheek flush as he looked at her.

It chanced that Rowland and Miss Gwynne were left together at a distance from the revel. They stood awhile, looking on, and talking over the day. Rowland said it had been most successful. Indeed he felt that all had been pleased; none more than himself, for had not everyone congratulated him, and above all, had not Miss Gwynne been even kinder and more friendly, than when by his mother's bed-side she had seemed to him as a sister?

"If it has been successful Mr. Rowland, it is in a great measure due to you," said Miss Gwynne, looking up into his face with a smile of real satisfaction. "I should never have managed the children so well, and I must say, much as I like your uncle, I don't think he would have managed the services so well as you have done."

Reader! were you ever praised by a very handsome woman, whom you have loved all your life, when standing with her alone under a wide-spreading oak, in a noble park, with mountains bathed in the red and yellow of the sunset before you, and a broad harvest-moon rising above your heads? If so, you will not wonder at the end of this chapter.

Rowland suddenly fixed his fine, dark eyes upon Freda's face, and looked into it, as if he would read her soul. For a moment she was abashed at the gaze, and coloured deeply, whilst her eye-lids drooped over the eyes he sought. Was there ever a woman who was not flattered and excited by such a look?

"Miss Gwynne," at last said Rowland tremulously, "if in any way I can have served and pleased you, I am happy. For this, in part, I have laboured, and still would labour. You do not, you cannot know how I have loved you all my life."

Poor Rowland almost whispered these few words, and as he did so, wished he could recall them, but now the deed was done, and she knew the secret of his childhood, boyhood, and

manhood. He said no more, but stood looking down upon her with his heart beating as it had never beaten before.

Higher and higher rose the colour on her cheek. What were the feelings that deepened it so? Alas! poor Rowland! Pride, only pride. For a moment, she stood as if hesitating what to say, then, suddenly drawing herself up to her full height, she looked haughtily at him, and said words that he never forgot to his dying day.

"Mr. Rowland Prothero, have you quite forgotten who I am, and who you are?"

With these words she made a stately bow, and turned towards the house. Proudly and hastily she walked up the avenue; once she turned round, and seeing Rowland standing exactly where she had left him, hurried on until she found herself in her own room, indulging in a very decided flood of indignant tears.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BROTHERS.

During this short conversation between Rowland and Miss Gwynne, Gladys was still playing with the children at no great distance from them. With all a woman's penetration, she had guessed Rowland's secret during his mother's illness, and had perceived no symptoms of attachment on the part of Miss Gwynne; and now, with all a woman's pity, she was watching him from afar. She had seen them standing together, had marked the hasty bow and retreat of the lady, and the immoveable attitude of the gentleman; she saw that he continued to stand where Miss Gwynne had left him, as if he were a statue; she guessed something must have passed between them.

As twilight was fairly come on, she told the schoolmistress that she must go home, and begged her to see that the children dispersed when she thought best. Owen, who was in the midst of a game of cricket with the boys, was as well aware of all Gladys' movements as if he had been by her side. He saw that she was shaking hands with the mistress, and that the children were imploring her to stay a little longer. He went to her and asked her to remain until he had finished his game, in order that he might see her home.

She thanked him, but said, rather abruptly for her, that she must go at once, and heedless of what he or others might think, went hastily across the park to Rowland.

"That's the way the wind blows, is it?" said Owen to himself, whilst a frown gathered on his open forehead.

Rowland was unconscious of the approach of Gladys, and was startled from his trance by the words,

"Mr. Rowland, Sir, I think the mistress will be expecting you home."

He looked at her half unconsciously for a moment, and then rousing himself, said,

"Oh! Gladys, is it you? Yes, I will go directly. Where? Home? Of course it is time. I will walk with you."

These were the only words spoken between the pair. Rapidly he strode down the avenue, inwardly resolving never to enter it again; as rapidly along the road that led to the farm, until he reached the house, with Gladys breathless by his side.

"I am afraid I have walked too quickly, Gladys, I am very sorry. I was anxious to get home, I do not feel very well."

With these words he hurried through the passage, and was going to his room, when his father met him and called him into the parlour. He felt so bewildered that he scarcely knew what his mother said, when she told him how proud and happy he had made her by his conduct that day.

"All, my dear son, church-people and dissenters were pleased with your sermon, and the way you managed every thing. Your aunt repeated it word for word to me, and it was

just what I like. This is the first comfort I have felt since—"

Mrs. Prothero pressed her son's hand, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Thank you, mother, I am glad," was all Rowland could say.

"Mind you, Row, my boy, you must write a good sermon for Sunday. You've got a character to lose now," said Mr. Prothero, giving him a slap on the back.

"Yes, father. I will go and write it."

"Not to-night, Rowland," said Mrs. Prothero anxiously; "you look pale and tired. What is the matter?"

"Nothing, mother; but I must think of this sermon, I have only one clear day. We will talk to-morrow. Good night, dear mother."

Rowland stooped to kiss his mother, and she felt that his face was very cold, and that his hand trembled.

"You are ill, Rowland?"

"No, only tired. I will come and see you again by and bye."

Rowland went to his room and bolted him-

self in. He threw himself on a chair, covered his face with his hands, and wept like a child. He was seated by a little writing-table near the window, through which the moon looked down pitifully upon him in his great anguish. Yes, great. Perhaps the greatest anguish of a life. His arms on the table, his head on his arms, he thought, in the misery of that moment, that he must die, and he wished to die. The illusion of a life was destroyed, and how? So rudely, so cruelly, so heartlessly broken! He could have borne it if there had been one kind word, only a look of interest or pity; but that pride and haughtiness were like the stabs of a dagger in his heart.

"Womanly weakness! unmanly folly!" you say, some one who has never felt keenly and suddenly the pangs of such a passion unrequited. Perhaps so. But out of our great weakness sometimes grows our strength; out of our bitterest disappointments our sternest resolution. By and bye such weakness will strengthen, such folly will breed wisdom.

Thus Rowland remained for some time, with unkind and unholy thoughts and feelings rush-

ing through his mind, like the howling winds through the air in a great storm. Afterwards, he prayed humbly to be forgiven those devilish feelings of anger, pride, hatred of life and mistrust of God's goodness that assailed him in that hour of misery. But for the time, they were darting to and fro, and casting out every good thought, and hopeful purpose from his soul, like demons as they were.

But strength came at last, and like one arising out of a horrid dream, Rowland got up from his anguish, and looked out into the night. The moon was too tender and beautiful for his mood at that time; he roughly drew down the blind, took a box of matches from the table, and lighted a candle. Then he paced up and down the room, and suddenly thought of Howel and Netta. He knew not how the transition took place, but he immediately accused himself of having been hard to them. Does any one ever fully sympathize with another, until he has felt as he does? No, we should not judge our weak fellow mortals so harshly, if we knew all their temptations and trials.

Then, again, Miss Gwynne returned to him, with her pride and coldness. How could he love such a woman? he, whose beau ideal of feminine perfection was a creature of gentleness, love and pity; but he would think of her no more. She, at least, should discover that he was as proud as herself.

Yes, he was proud, he knew it, and now, he would glory in his pride instead of trample it, as he had been of late trying to do, down as an arch tempter; he should be justified in showing pride for her pride.

Again a gentler and better mood came. Was he not vain, ambitious, ridiculous in her eyes, for venturing to speak to her as he had done? Doubtless he had been wrong, but she needed not to spurn him as she had done; she might have told him so as a friend. Friend! she thought him beneath her friendship.

But we will not pursue these musings further; every kind and degree of feeling alternated for nearly two hours, when as if by some sudden impulse or resolution, Rowland sat down and determined to write his sermon. It should be upon pride, and should touch her as well as

himself. He found pleasure in thinking of all the texts in which the word occurs, in looking for them, and considering which was the most biting.

A hasty knock at his door interrupted this study. It was Owen who insisted upon coming in, and would take no excuse.

Owen, too, had been ruminating upon the nature of woman, and was not in a very good humour; he, however, had been cheerfully talking to his mother of the events of the day, and duly lauding their own particular hero, Rowland.

When he entered, he looked surprised at seeing Rowland with his Bible in his hand; he took a chair, and turning his seat towards him, sat down astride upon it, leaning his chin upon the back and facing Rowland.

"Now, Rowland, I'm going to ask you a very plain question. There ought to be no secrets between brothers: I've told you all mine, nearly; you must tell me yours. Are you in love?"

Poor Rowland coloured to the temples, but did not answer.

"You wont tell me? There was a time, Rowland, when you and I knew one another's

hearts as well as if they were two open books, in which we could read when we like, but I suppose London and fine people—"

"Stop, Owen, do not disgrace yourself or me by going on. Why do you wish to probe me in a wounded place, where every stab is death?"

Owen looked at his brother, and saw the conflict that was going on in his mind in the working of his features.

"Rowland, I only want your confidence; by Jove you shall have mine, even though you are my successful rival; and I love you so well that I would give her up to you, if it cost me —let me see—a voyage to the North Pole."

"Owen, this is no jesting matter, I have been a fool, I am ashamed of myself, I am trying to conquer my feelings; leave me until I have succeeded, and then—"

"But, Rowland, if she loves you, I don't see why you should try to overcome your feelings. It would not be quite the right match, certainly; but she would make a better person's wife than a sailor's wife after all; and my father might consent in time, and—"

"Owen, is it kind of you to make a jest of me?" asked Rowland, rising from his chair, and resuming his walk up and down his room. "If you had ever really loved either of the many girls you have fancied you adored, you would understand me better; but I deserve it all for my presumption—my folly."

"For that much, Rowland, perhaps I love her a trifle better than you do at this very moment; still I am not selfish enough to come between you, and would rather try absence and the northern latitudes; only just be honest. I'm not quite such a piece of blubber as not to be capable of constancy, though I may have been a rover until now; but when I see a girl walk right away from me, and refuse to wait for me to go home with her, and go straight off to another man, never mind if he was my father, instead of my brother, I don't mean to break my heart about her. Besides, I'm disappointed in her, and that's the truth. I thought she was as modest as the moon; but I never saw the moon walk out of her straight path to go after another planet, and no girl that I have anything to say to, shall go after another man. So

you're welcome to her, though I'll say this, that I never saw the woman yet I loved so well, and believe she's as good as gold, as pure as that same moon, but as cold as ice itself; at least, so I've found her, perhaps you've a warmer experience." As soon as Owen paused in his rapid speech, Rowland paused in his walk, and putting his hand on Owen's shoulder, said,

"This is a misapprehension, my dear Owen; you and I are thinking of a different person."

"I am thinking of Gladys," said Owen bluntly, "and repeat that I love you both too well to come between you and happiness."

"I am sure of that, Owen, you have no selfishness about you; but I do not love Gladys. I never thought of her except as a beautiful and superior girl, thrown by Providence amongst us, and to be treated with kindness and consideration. I only hope my manner to her has never indicated anything else."

"Do you mean what you say?" said Owen, jumping up from his chair, and cutting a caper, "then shake hands, and tell me you forgive me for being so hasty."

They shook hands heartily, and Rowland said,

"Thank you, Owen, you have done me good; now go away, and I will write my sermon."

"Not before I know what is the matter with you, and why Gladys went across on purpose to walk home with you."

After much hesitation, and some pressing on the part of Owen, Rowland told his brother what had passed between him and Miss Gwynne. When he had made a clean breast of it, he felt as if relieved of half his load—especially when Owen assured him that women were all alike, and that when you asked them the first time, they were as proud as Lucifer.

"It is first and last with me, Owen. I have forgotten my position, my profession, my own dignity in giving way to a passion that I had no right to suppose could be returned. I will crush it, and nobody but you shall ever know of its existence. This struggle over, and I shall hope henceforth to have but one Master and to serve Him."

"Well, I never should have thought you would have fancied Miss Gwynne; not but that

she is handsome and clever, and very agreeable, and kind, too, when she pleases; but so proud, so domineering, and then—"

"Neither should I have supposed Gladys to be your choice, Owen; and I am so sorry it should be so. What would my father say? so soon upon Netta, too; and you must confess that her uncertain history, her present condition, the way she came to us, would be utter barriers to anything serious."

"Bravo, Rowland; now I must put the application to your lecture. I suppose everything is by comparison in this world—the squire and the squire's daughter look down upon the farmer and the farmer's son, and beg to decline the honour of an alliance. The farmer and the farmer's son look down upon the corporal and corporal's daughter, and beg to do the same, especially as she is their servant. Tom, the carpenter, thinks his daughter too good for Joseph the labourer, and Matthew the shoeblack wouldn't let his son marry Sal the crossing-sweeper for all the world. Oh, Rowland! is this what you have learnt from your profession, and the book before you? Why I've

found a better philosophy on board ship, with no teachers but the moon and stars."

"Owen, I am ashamed of myself. My pride deserves to be thus pulled down."

"I don't want to seem unkind, Rowland; but my notion is, that an honest gentleman, such as you, educated, and a clergyman, is good enough for any lady; and that a good, religious girl, who has saved my mother's life, is a great deal too good for a ne'er-do-well fellow like me. But I won't fall before I'm pushed, since I'm pretty sure she thinks so too. So, now, cheer up, old boy! and show the heiress what a sermon you can preach; and let her see you don't care a fig for her; and then, by jingo, she'll be over head and ears in love with you, and propose herself next Leap-year."

Rowland laughed, in spite of himself, at this notion.

"I will go and wish my mother good night," he said, "and then set to work."

The brothers went together to their mother, who was in bed, and together received her "God bless you, my children!" Then they separated for the night, and Rowland returned

to his room a wiser, if still a sadder man, than when Owen visited it. Owen's plain common sense had often got the better of Rowland's romance; and although he could not approve his roving, and seemingly useless life, he always acknowledged that he gathered some wisdom by his experience.

Again Rowland sat down, but this time he drew up the blind, and let the moonlight in upon his chamber like a silver flood. He took himself to task for his pride, ambition, and conceit, in a way that did him good, doubtless, but was not palatable; still he made many excuses for himself, and none for Miss Gwynne. He was not to recover the effects of that disappointment in a few hours! Days and even years were necessary for that. But he asked for strength where it is never asked in vain, and then resolutely wrote a sermon on the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

He wrote as he felt, and under the influence of those strong, half-curbed feelings, wrote so easily, that he was astonished to find how quickly he composed, and how soon a sufficient

number of sheets were written, to occupy his customary half-hour when preached. He did not read them over, but promised to do so on the morrow, which was Saturday. He was already far into the small hours, and knew that he ought to be in bed.

When he was there he could not sleep. That love of his was too deeply-rooted to be torn up by a few proud words that haunted him all the night, and to which he was constantly adding, "Yes, you are the heiress of Glanaravon, and I am only a farmer's son and a poor curate."

CHAPTER V.

THE GOVERNESS.

"ONLY a curate!" exclaimed Miss Gwynne, as she and Miss Hall were discussing Rowland's presumption the following morning.

"Still, a gentleman," replied Miss Hall, quietly.

"The son of one of my father's tenants; a farmer's son!"

"Still, a gentleman!"

"The ninety-ninth attempt on Glanaravon, and, happily, an unsuccessful one."

"Perhaps the first sincere attempt to gain the heiress's heart, without any thought of her park and its broad acres."

"I declare, Serena, *vous m'impatientez*. I

verily believe you are in his interest and confidence, and trying to plead his cause."

This was said with great excitement; the answer, however, was calm.

"Scarcely possible, if probable; because I was never alone with him in my life, and have rarely seen him except in your presence."

"Then why do you take up his defence? You would not have me marry him, would you?"

"Certainly not, for many reasons. In the first place, you do not love him; in the second, your father would not approve of such a match; in the third, you are not suited to him."

"I understand. Not good enough. But why do you defend him? Do you think it was right of him to say what he did to me?"

"Well, perhaps not. But I think he has been nursing these feelings for you so long, that he began to forget whether they were right or wrong, sensible or foolish; and last night, carried away by the excitement of the day, and his own success, and finding himself alone with you—you, probably, more friendly than usual

—he forgot his customary prudence, and overstepped the bounds of conventionality."

"Very well said, Nita. Then it was wrong of me to be friendly, and right of him to make a dunce of himself."

"Perhaps if you had ever felt as he does, Freda, you might make some excuse for him."

"I am sure you must have been in love a hundred times, you are so sentimental, and would like to see him run away with me."

"Quite wrong again."

"Then what would you like, for I am sure you don't approve of my conduct?"

"Simply, that you should have treated a clergyman and a gentleman as such, and at least felt grateful that a good and honest heart was offered to you, even though you would not accept it."

"But I don't believe in the heart, you see, Serena. There is not a more mercenary race under the sun than the clergy. They all marry for money. I can mention quite a dozen; his own uncle at the head of them. Now, you cannot suppose that he married Mrs. Jonathan

Prothero for anything but her fortune and her family."

"I think he is too simple-minded a man to have considered either the one or the other."

"Then why didn't he marry some simple-minded girl, his equal? No, you are quite out of your depth now, Serena. Depend upon it, that Rowland Prothero will soon find some English lady just as rich as I *am to be*—always provided that Lady Mary Nugent doesn't carry off papa, and get him to leave her the property. These men don't seem to know that it is not entailed; and that after all, I may be cut off with a shilling. I think I may venture to affirm that were such the case, there is not one of my ninety-nine adorers who would have me, except, perhaps, poor Sir Hugh."

"Perhaps, Freda, I may have been imprudent, situated as I am here, in even saying what I have in favour of Rowland Prothero. The fact is, that not only do I particularly like what I know of him, but there is a little passage in my early history that makes me have a great pity for young men who venture to fall in love

with young ladies who consider themselves their superiors."

"If you will tell me your story, Nita, I will forgive you all the rest, and finish this sketch of Abertewey for Colonel Vaughan, meanwhile."

Freda drew beautifully in water-colours, and had before her, as she sat in the embrasure of one of the windows of that charming morning-room, a half-finished sketch of Colonel Vaughan's place, which he had begged her to take for him. Hitherto it had been untouched; now she began to work at it with pretended vigour, whilst Miss Hall took up the little frock she was making for a poor child, which had been laid down during the discussion, and also made believe to stitch and sew industriously.

But there was a flush on her cheek, and a tremor in her voice, as she began to tell Freda the little passage in her life to which she had alluded. Freda was conscious of this, and accordingly devoted herself more energetically to her drawing.

"It was when I was just eighteen, Freda, and during my *beaux jours*, before my father had lost his fortune, or been obliged to retire

from the army on half-pay on account of that dreadful paralytic stroke—before my sister's imprudent marriage, and consequent emigration to Australia—before my dear mother's death. We were a happy and gay family, and I had then more pride and higher spirits than you would probably give me credit for now.

"I was visiting a friend who had married the head-master of one of our principal grammar schools. Amongst his tutors there was a young man of whom he was very fond, and who used to be a good deal with his family after the duties of the day were over. It is just possible that he was a countryman of yours, for his name was Jones."

"Oh! Serena! you don't mean to say that you fell in love with a Jones in England, and then came into Wales to be in the midst of that very ancient and numerous family."

"I have not come to the love part yet, Freda. He was a very quiet and unobtrusive person, but, my friends said, very amiable and sufficiently clever. I know that I used to take an unkind delight in teazing him, and that he was rather clever in repartee, and never spared me in

return. I liked him as an amusing companion, and had no objection to his getting me books or flowers, or whatever lay within his reach that might be agreeable to me. Moreover, I pitied him, because I was told that both his parents were dead, and that he was working hard to pay for his own course at college, whither he intended to go as soon as he could get the means.

"As my father was with his regiment abroad at this time, and my mother and sister were making a round of visits amongst our Scotch friends, I stayed a long time with the Merryweathers. They were very pleasant people, and had an agreeable circle of acquaintance.

"But that has nothing to do with my story. The evening before I left them to return home, my friend Mr. Jones managed to be alone with me; how, I never found out, for he ought to have been with the boys—and committed a similar misdemeanour to that of poor Rowland Prothero. He had unfortunately lost his heart to me—so he said, and was constrained to tell me so. Would I think of him, if, in the course of time, he could enter the church and marry me?

"Now I had the world before me, a happy home, a prospect of a certain independence, and, I suppose, a sufficient share of personal attractions. I had never considered whether I could like this young man or not; but I had well considered that when I married, I must have talent, position, personal beauty, and a hundred other visionary attributes in my husband. I was of a most imaginative, and at the same time, ambitious temperament; and on the one hand, thought a great poet or warrior would fall to my lot, and on the other, that a prince of the blood royal was not too good for me.

"Your pride, my dear Freda, is too matter-of fact, as is your general character, thoroughly to understand me. At that time, I was touched and flattered by the devotion of this young man, and felt, that had he been differently placed, and had he more of the attributes either of station or romance about him, I might have taken him under my august consideration; but as I had never even looked upon him in the light of a lover, or supposed it possible that he could be one, I at once, and decidedly refused him.

"I shall never forget the pained and melan-

choly expression of his features when I did so, or the few words he uttered. He said that he had not ventured to hope for a different answer, though he had dared to speak, and that his one slight prospect of happiness had vanished. He had now nothing but a life of labour before him, without a gleam of hope to cheer his way, but that he should think of me always, and of the happy hours we had passed together. I felt so sorry for him, that I could really say nothing, either to cheer or discourage him. He simply asked me to allow him to remain my friend, and to forgive his presumption; and so we shook hands and parted. He did not join the family that evening, and the next day I left the Merryweathers.

"I do not know how it was, but when I returned home, I thought more of this young man than of any one else. Although my sister and myself were surrounded by men of a very different, and I may say, superior class, still he haunted me very much, for a time at least.

Then came my sister's marriage, which proved, as you know, unfortunate in a pecuniary point of view; and her and her husband's emi-

gration to Australia in search of fortune. Then followed our own ruin, and my father's paralytic seizure. To help my parents and support myself, I came to you as governess. You know, dearest Freda, how happy your dear mother made me as long as she lived, and how ardently I desired to fulfil her dying wish that I should finish your education. Most thankful I am that I was permitted to do so.

"I need not tell you, over and over again, the sad story of my mother's death, and my return home to live with my father, and become a daily instead of a resident governess. All the happiness I have known—at least the greatest—since our troubles, has been in this house.

"But this has nothing to do with Mr. Jones. I heard, casually, from my friend Mrs. Merryweather, that he had left them and gone to college; what college she did not say. For some years I had quite enough of painful duty to perform, to make me forget the weeks passed in his society, and their termination, or to think of a person of whom I had quite lost sight. About six or seven years ago, however, I heard of him, strange to say, through my sister. I

had, of course, told her of his proposal and my refusal.

"She and her husband were among the early settlers at Melbourne, and in the course of time became tolerably prosperous. He, you know, was obliged to leave his regiment for drunkenness, and contrary to the usual course of things, became steadier, though not steady, in Australia. My sister lost two children in one week from fever, and during her great sorrow was constantly visited by the clergyman of her parish, who turned out to be my early friend, Mr. Jones. I do not think he knew she was my sister for some time; but she described his untiring kindness and gentleness, as her greatest comfort during her troubles. He was also of great benefit to her husband, by taking advantage of the opportunity offered by the loss of his children, to press upon him the necessity of a reformation in his own course of life, which I am thankful to say, has been gradually effected. They became very intimate, and, I suppose by mutually comparing notes concerning Old England, found one another out, so to say. But he seldom spoke of me. If my sister tried to draw him

into the subject of his acquaintance with me, he changed it as soon as possible, as if it were disagreeable to him. And no wonder.

"However, my sister looks upon this man as her greatest benefactor—him, whom I, in my pride and ignorance considered beneath me in every respect; and when he left Melbourne a year or two ago, she said they had lost their best and dearest earthly friend, and that the children cried when he wished them good-bye, as if they were parting from a father."

Whilst Miss Hall was telling this simple narrative, Freda was very attentive. As it drew to a close, she rose from her drawing, and kneeling, as she sometimes would do by Miss Hall's side, put her arm affectionately round her. There was something in the action at that moment, which drew tears from Miss Hall's eyes.

"But he is not married, Serena, I know he is not married," she exclaimed. "Who knows!"

"My dear child," said Miss Hall, smiling, and stroking Freda's shining hair, "I have long given up all thoughts of matrimony. But the recollection of old times always affects me, and your love affects me still more. I have not told

you this because I regret not being married to Mr. Jones—it was mercifully ordained that I should not marry any one. What would my dear father have done if I had? but simply to show you how the very people we think the least of, frequently become our best friends; the 'weak things of the earth, confounding those that are mighty' in Scripture phrase."

"Oh, Serena! do you hear?" interrupted Freda, "there is Miss Nugent in the hall. Of all the bores! we never can be free from those people. Yes it is; I hear her *lithp;*" and Miss Nugent was announced.

She had walked over, she said, to ask how they all were after the delightful Harvest Home, and to bring an invitation from her mamma to dinner the following Tuesday.

"I do hope you will come, Freda, and you Mith Hall, and bring that charming Colonel Vaughan with you. He ith tho nithe. Don't you think tho."

"Very," said Freda drily.

"But do you know I don't admire him half ath much ath Mr. Rowland Prothero. Mamma

thaith he ith tho gentleman-like, and that the meanth to athk him Tuethday."

"Really!" again said Freda, not daring to look at Miss Hall.

"We are going to Llanfach to-morrow to hear him preach. Hith thermon wath beautiful in the school-room. Don't you think he ith like the picture at the beginning of 'Evangeline.' Dear me, who wath he, Freda?"

"Longfellow, you mean, I suppose."

"Of courth. And hith language is so poetical. Mamma thaith the thouldn't wonder if he turned out a great author by and bye. Thould you Mith Hall?"

"It takes so much to make a great author, dear: but it is just possible."

"But not probable," whispered Freda.

"Oh! Freda, don't you like him? I am thure you ought; he managed every thing tho nithely for you yethterday. Mamma thaith—Ah! there is Colonel Vaughan coming up the drive."

Miss Hall looked across at Freda, and remarked that she began to draw most industri-

ously and did not look out of the window as Miss Nugent did.

"Mamma thaith," began that young lady, "that the Colonel ith the motht accomplithed and agreeable man in Waleth."

"How can she tell that?" asked Freda with feigned surprise. "There are so many clever men in Wales. I assure you we are a talented race."

"I am thure of that, Freda; but I think the Englith are more thinthere; mamma thaith tho."

"Ah, she must be a good judge," said Freda, somewhat ironically.

"Yeth; mamma ath theen a great deal of the world," replied the unsuspecting Miss Nugent.

Here Colonel Vaughan made his appearance, and that young lady gave him her mamma's invitation, which he said he should be delighted to accept, if his friends did; so Freda said her papa was out, but she would send Lady Mary Nugent an answer when he came in.

"Ah! this *is* a sketch, Freda," said Colonel Vaughan, who had somehow returned to the

old familiarity of earlier days. "How can I thank you sufficiently? who could think that the child I left twelve years ago would be such a good artist when I returned? But that was the cleverest bit of life like drawing I ever saw, that sketch of your old pony. By the way, do you know who this is?"

The Colonel opened a sketch-book that he had in his hand, and put it into Freda's.

"Why this is Gladys, Mrs. Prothero's Gladys. How could you prevail on her to stand for her picture? Look, Serena, how well Colonel Vaughan has hit off her expression and general effect in those few touches!"

"I went to see Prothero, who used to be a good friend of mine in old times, and whilst I was waiting for him and looking out of window, I saw this Gladys in the garden, and made the attempt you are pleased to praise. Certainly she is about the loveliest specimen of country beauty I ever saw in my life."

"Do you admire her, Colonel Vaughan? I think the ith tho very pale and thupid."

"I never contradict a young lady, and suppose you must be right; but in the present

company one cannot think of other belles. It would be a case of looking for stars in the presence of the sun."

Colonel Vaughan glanced from one to the other of the ladies. Freda bent more closely over her sketch, but coloured perceptibly. Miss Nugent simpered and looked very handsome withal.

Miss Hall was struck with her beauty as she then appeared; a perfect profile, perfect complexion, perfect features, beneath a most becoming straw hat and feathers. Such a colour and complexion, but no expression, not even the sarcastic turn of the lip of the mother.

"Perfectly child-like, amiable and silly," thought Miss Hall, "and yet Colonel Vaughan admires that statue more than the noble face and grand expression of my Freda."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PREACHER.

As Mr. Jonathan Prothero's sprain proved to be a very bad one, Rowland was obliged to undertake his weekly as well as his Sunday duty, and being summoned to the vicarage early on Saturday morning for a wedding, and finding other clerical duty in the afternoon, he had no time to revise his sermon, until the morning on which he was to preach it. His mind was still in a state of so much excitement, that he found, on reading it over, that he had no power to amend what he had written hastily, but feeling that it was what he earnestly desired to act up to himself, and to bring his own mind down to, he hoped the words would not be

without effect on his hearers. If Miss Gwynne took them as intended personally to touch her, why, he could not help it, and besides, she probably would be at Llanfawr church, to avoid seeing him.

But this was not the case, Gwynnes, Nugents, Protheros, and many others of Rowland's neighbours, helped to fill the little church that Sunday, all anxious to hear him preach; this made him feel nervous in spite of himself. In vain he reasoned with himself, prayed to forget himself, and those present—he could not get rid of those haunting words of Miss Gwynne's, or of the consciousness that she was listening to him. However he read the service clearly and impressively, in the manly tone, and simply religious manner of one who knows that he is leading the prayers and praises of a congregation who cannot express their wants too humbly and naturally, to One who knows what they desire, even before they ask. No one in that church prayed more earnestly to be delivered from "all blindness of heart, from pride, vain-glory and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness," than he did. And as he proceeded

with the litany, his mind grew calmer, and he gradually received strength to overcome the great inward struggle that he was suffering from.

Before reading the thanksgiving, he gave out in a tremulous voice, that a "member of that congregation was desirous of returning thanks to Almighty God for her recovery from dangerous illness." When he thanked God for all His mercies to all men, "particularly to her who desires now to offer up her praises and thanksgivings for late mercies vouchsafed unto her," every one felt that he was returning thanks for his own mother's recovery, and joined him in so doing. His father was seen to put his handkerchief to his eyes, as he lifted up his heart in praise.

His earnest manner evidently impressed his congregation, who were usually accustomed to the somewhat monotonous reading of his uncle, and to his rather learned discourses.

It is generally the case, that words spoken from the overflowings of the speaker's own heart and feelings, make the greatest impression on the hearts and feelings of his hearers; so it was now. When Rowland, in simple and forcible

language, told his listeners that the first words of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, were to bless the poor in spirit, and to promise them the Kingdom of Heaven; and went on to contrast such poverty of spirit with the pride and vain glory inherent in man, and to call up the various scriptural examples and texts that bore upon the subject of humility; he gained the attention of all. Then he enlarged more particularly on the necessity of curbing and bridling, and keeping down the spirit, until it attained that lowliness to which our Saviour alludes in the very first of the beatitudes; and finally went through that Saviour's life, as the great example for all men, of meekness, gentleness, and humility—the interest in his words increased.

Rowland preached from the heart to the heart, and so his sermon that day was not in vain, albeit not perhaps written in the very best of moods. There was no poetry, no overheated enthusiasm, no display of eloquence, but the plain, straight-forward announcement to rich and poor alike, that to enter God's kingdom, the spirit must become even as that of a little child.

Perhaps this is the least understood, and least palatable of all subjects, and when brought before a congregation, and well discussed for half an hour, must make many of its members pause to consider whether, on such terms, "theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Miss Gwynne was one of those who paused so to consider, and acknowledged to herself that she had never looked upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, as so practically and so particularly addressed to herself before. She did not for a moment believe that the Sermon was intended for her, more than for the rest of the congregation, but she felt, for the first time, that she had been proud and over-bearing in her conduct to the preacher, as well as to many others whom she chose to think her inferiors.

She left the church, resolved to make such amends as were in her power, for the hasty and haughty way of her rejection of Rowland, and to strive to be less proud for the future.

When she was without, her father said to her, that he must go into the vicarage to congratulate the Vicar on his nephew's preaching, and to ask Rowland to dinner. Miss Gwynne

endeavoured to dissuade him from doing so, but Lady Nugent expressed her intention of performing similar civilities; consequently the whole party, Colonel Vaughan and Miss Hall inclusive, walked across the churchyard to the vicarage, which lay just the other side of it.

The vicarage was a snug little cottage, with a rustic porch, covered with the Virginian creeper, which, together with the massive ivy, also nearly covered the house. Red and cheerful looked the tiny dwelling beneath the autumn sun; and very pretty was the garden which surrounded it, still bright with dahlias, fuschias, red geraniums, and monthly roses. It was here, years ago, that Rowland, Miss Gwynne, and Netta had often played together; and it was here that Rowland had passed the principal part of his holidays when at home from Rugby or college. It was here that Mrs. Jonathan had done her utmost to make a gentleman of him, and had succeeded to her heart's content. Rowland had been very happy with his uncle and aunt, and loved them almost as well as his parents.

In the pretty garden were innumerable wonderful stones heaped into all sorts of masses,

which he had helped his uncle to bring from various parts in the neighbourhood, and all of which were curiosities in their way; and there, also, was a fernery which he himself had made, and which contained all the remarkable ferns of a country rich in those beautiful productions of nature. The vicarage and its garden were neatness itself. Mrs. Jonathan prided herself on them, and took great pains to prove that there could be, in a Welsh country village, a clergyman's abode something akin to the far-famed dwellings of the English ecclesiastic.

The party from the church quite filled the little drawing-room. Mr. Jonathan Prothero was in an easy-chair, with his foot on a cushion, and looking very much like a caged stork.

Every one began by congratulating him on the success of his nephew in the pulpit.

"He must become a popular preacher," said Lady Mary Nugent.

"I must say I have seldom heard more simple yet forcible language," said Mr. Gwynne.

"He touched us all upon our besetting sin of pride," said Colonel Vaughan, glancing at Miss Gwynne, who said nothing.

"And such a beautiful voice!" remarked Miss Nugent.

Mrs. Jonathan looked delighted.

"But where is he all this time, my dear?" asked the Vicar.

We must answer the question by informing the reader, that having watched his congregation leave the church, he went into the vestry and sat down there, in order to avoid meeting any of the Gwynne party, when a messenger from his aunt came to inform him that he was wanted at once. He enquired by whom, and on hearing, tried to arm himself for an unavoidable encounter with Miss Gwynne.

When he entered the room she was talking to his uncle, and had her back turned to the door. He was at once greeted by Mr. Gwynne and Lady Mary Nugent, so that he did not find it necessary to shake hands with every one, and made a kind of general bow, which he addressed to Miss Hall particularly, and was therefore unconscious of the half-attempt of Freda to rise from her seat as he entered. Miss Hall, alone, saw the flush on her cheek, as she relapsed into her position by Mr. Jonathan Prothero and

professed to be listening to the cause of his accident. His adventurous search after trinobites in a celebrated quarry, the slipping of a stone, and consequent spraining of his right ancle, sounded into one of her ears, whilst the following conversation entered the other.

"I hope you will give us the pleasure of your company, on Tuesday," said Lady Mary Nugent. "We shall not be a large party."

"And will come to us on Wednesday," said Mr. Gwynne. "We must have some more chess. I have never met with a fair opponent since—hem—I beg your pardon, Lady Mary—Ah—yes—or, or Thursday. You see, we did not like to ask you whilst your mother was so ill; my daughter thought it would be useless."

Rowland coloured at the allusion to Freda, but did not even glance at her.

"Thank you, Lady Mary; thank you, Mr. Gwynne, very much indeed, but I intend being in London on Tuesday. I have already outstayed my prescribed fortnight."

"My dear Rowland!" exclaimed his aunt, "you do not mean this?"

"Yes, aunt; my fellow curate has been

fortunate enough to get a living given him, and is to read himself in next Sunday, and I have promised to take double duty."

"But one day more or less," suggested Lady Nugent, who did not imagine it possible that Rowland Prothero *could* refuse an invitation from her, which was, in her opinion, quite a royal command. She, so exclusive!

"I am very much obliged to your ladyship, but I have promised to be in London on Tuesday; and as my mother is really better, there is no longer any necessity for my staying in the country?"

"Your uncleth foot?" suggested Miss Nugent.

"Two good dinners, and more agreeable company than you will meet with in your East-end parish!" said Colonel Vaughan.

"My uncle will easily find help," said Rowland, turning to Miss Nugent, "although I am sorry not to be able to give him more; and," to Colonel Vaughan, with a smile, "had you ever tried the far East, you would know that there is very good company there, as well as in the West. I should be very glad to introduce

you to some, if you would come and see me in town."

"That I certainly will," said the Colonel, heartily; "and I shall be able to tell you all about your sister, as I heard yesterday that her husband has finally taken my place, and will be down here as soon as it is put in first-rate order, furnished, &c."

"You are not likely to leave us yet I hope, Colonel Vaughan," said Lady Mary Nugent.

"For a time, I must; but having found how pleasant you all are down here, I shall hope to come again frequently, if Miss Gwynne will second her papa's invitation."

Freda just turned round, bowed and smiled, and then resolutely resumed her conversation with, or rather act of listening to, the Vicar.

"How interested you appear to be," whispered the Colonel, sitting down behind her.

Rowland saw this little bit of by-play, and wished himself in London. Whilst Colonel Vaughan joined in the Vicar's archæological description of the quarry in which he had met with his accident, Freda heard all

that Rowland said more distinctly than what passed close at her side.

She heard her father's and Lady Mary's repeated entreaties that he would remain until the end of the week, and the decided, but polite refusal of Rowland. She heard her father prophecy that he would soon have a good living, and Rowland's reply, "that without interest or any particular talent for what is called 'popular preaching,' there was little chance of church preferment. But," he added, "I am well content to be only a curate. There is enough to do in my parish to keep one from morning to night employed, and that in real, active, heart-stirring work, that will not let one flag if one would wish it."

"I thould like to thee the Eatht end, mamma," said Miss Nugent. "People in the Wetht theem to think all the inhabitanths barbarians."

"It is a pity they don't come and try to civilize us, then," said Rowland. "We should be very glad of their help."

"I will go, if mamma will let me," said Miss Nugent.

Lady Mary smiled somewhat superciliously, and observed that she did not think she would be of much use.

"All who have a desire to do good will make a path of usefulness, Lady Mary, I think," said Rowland. "In these days, the enlightened must not hide their light under a bushel. We live in stirring, striving times, when good and evil seem at terrible issue."

"And which will conquer?" broke in Colonel Vaughan suddenly. "I don't see that all the meetings and tracts have done much, as yet, towards their part in the fight."

"Good must conquer eventually," said Rowland, "and is conquering daily and hourly."

"In your East-end parish?"

"We hope so. If our progress is slow, we are not without encouragement even there, in the very thick of the battle, and where the armies of evil are ten to one against good."

"I know something of fighting, Mr. Rowland, and I fear the odds are too great. You may as well give up the conflict."

"Remember, Colonel Vaughan, that in all

the great battles of antiquity, and not a few of modern times—the Swiss for example—those who fought for freedom and right have always found their arms nerved to resist multitudes—hundreds have conquered tens of thousands. So is it with our warfare. We have strength given us that makes the single champion of the cross, powerful against the legion of his adversaries."

"Very well said, nephew," broke in the Vicar, "Marathon, Thermopylæ, Platea—"

"I am afraid we are keeping you from your dinner, Mrs. Prothero," interrupted Mr. Gwynne, who had a nervous dread of the Vicar's antiquities, whether in war or peace. "Freda, I think we must go."

Freda rose from her seat, and shook hands very warmly with Mr. and Mrs. Prothero. She had made up her mind to do the same with Rowland; but just as she approached the door near which he had been standing, he said he would go out and see whether the carriages were ready, and did so accordingly. They followed him as soon as the leave-takings were over, and found him waiting at the gate.

He immediately assisted Lady Mary and Miss Nugent into their carriage, leaving Colonel Vaughan to perform the same office for Miss Gwynne and Miss Hall. Mr. Gwynne staid to shake hands with him, and tell him that he should always be glad to see him; and Colonel Vaughan promised to pay him a visit as soon as he went to town. The former got into the carriage, the latter upon the box to drive. Rowland stood by the door a moment irresolute.

"Good bye, Mr. Rowland," said Miss Hall, "I shall hope often to see your mother."

"Thank you, Miss Hall," said Rowland, pressing the hand she held out to him with an iron pressure.

Freda was just going to put out her hand across Miss Hall, when Colonel Vaughan touched the horses, and the carriage drove off. Rowland raised his hat, and as he glanced at Freda, saw that she was looking at him not altogether unkindly. After those words of hers, he never could have shaken hands with her, unless she made the advance; and so they parted, he believing her too proud to acknowledge him

after what he had said to her; she admiring what she considered his pride and resentment a great deal more than she had ever done his humility.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LOVER.

SPRING came round again, and Owen and Gladys were still at the Farm. The following conversation will show how they went on together.

"Let me carry that bucket for you, Gladys," said Owen, one evening when she was proceeding across the farm-yard, to carry a warm mesh to a sick cow.

"It is not heavy, Sir," said Gladys, gently.

"It is too heavy for you, *Ma'am*," said Owen, emphasizing the 'ma'am.'

He took the bucket from her, and carried it to the shed, where Gladys dosed and fed her sick cow so very tenderly, that Owen was impelled to say,

"I wish I were that cow."

"Oh, Sir! she is but a poor, sick, witless animal."

"But she has you to nurse and be kind to her; so I wish I were that cow."

"Sure, Sir, I would be glad to nurse you if you were sick."

"Would you, Gladys? Then I will be sick to-morrow."

"I hope not, Mr. Owen. Come, poor Mally. Drink it up."

"Never mind, Mally, but attend to me. Will you not be so cold, and stiff, and respectful to me. I hate a girl who 'Sir's' me as if I were a lord, and makes me curtseys, and never looks at me, and seems as if she hated me—"

"Oh, no, indeed no, Sir—"

"And lives all day long in the same house, and scarcely speaks to me. You will drive me off to sea again, *Ma'am*, if you don't take care. Look into my face, and say why you hate me so!"

"I hate no one in the world, Sir; much less any one of your name."

Here the girl looked up from the poor cow who was licking her hand, and round whose neck her arm was flung, into the face of the young man. Owen put his hand on the arm that rested on the cow, and said earnestly,

"Then treat me as your brother."

"I have lost my brothers and sisters, and father and mother, and kith and kin. I have seen them all die—all that ever loved me. Oh! Mr. Owen! you are too kind—too kind; but do not talk to me so, or it will break my heart."

Here was even more of Irish feeling than Owen either expected or desired. But he took Gladys' hand in his, and, looking kindly from his large, honest, dark eyes into hers, said,

"Forgive me, Gladys, for making you think of your sorrows. But you know my dear sister Netta is as good as lost to me, and I want some one who will be like her, or at least, who will not be quite as cold as clay."

Gladys withdrew her eyes and her hand. There was even more than brotherly warmth in that kind glance and winning manner.

"Thank you, Sir, I will try; indeed I will,"

said Gladys as she took up the bucket, and turned to leave the shed.

"Thank you, Ma'am, you are very obliging, but you are not going to carry my bucket."

"Oh, Sir! if you please do not speak so to a poor servant girl like me. I would rather not hear it."

"You will not see, or hear, or believe what I do, and say and think all day long; so now, here, where nobody else can listen, you must hear me. You must learn to be happy with us, you must love us, you must—"

"Oh! I do, Sir, I do. Let me go, Sir, if you please."

"Not until you hear that you must love me, even me whom you cannot bear."

"Oh! I do, Sir,—I do. I thank you, I pray for you, I love you all, always; indeed, indeed, I do."

"But better than all the others, as I love you, so as to be my wife when—when—"

"Let me go, Mr. Owen, if you please. You must not talk to me so, Sir; me, just now a beggar at your gate."

"But I must, I will, and you must listen.

In spite of myself, and of your cold manners and pale face, and all the trouble you take to avoid me, I love you, Gladys, and will marry you if you will have me. I will give up the sea, and become a steady fellow, and live at home, and make you and my parents happy, and—"

"Oh! Mr. Owen, if your parents were to hear you talking like this to me, what would they say to you? what would they think of me? You should not make a joke of my poverty and friendless state, Sir. Anything else, but not this! oh! not this! and from you."

"I was never more in earnest in all my life, and ask for only one word of encouragement from you to go and tell my father and mother directly."

"Oh! if you please, Mr. Owen, do not do this. If you are in earnest, Sir, and I hope you are not, you must forget that you ever said this to me."

"I do not mean to forget it, Gladys, or to let you forget it. Will you say the word? only give me hope and all will be right. Will you

marry me, and be the daughter of your adopted mother?"

"I can never marry any one, Sir; I have nothing to live for in this world, but to try to do my duty to you and yours, and to think of those I have lost."

"Gladys, your cold manner maddens me. Say you hate me, and would rather marry some one else; say anything that has some heart in it. We sailors are made of warmer stuff than such icebergs as you."

"I cannot say that, Sir, because I do not hate you; and I never mean to marry, and I would sooner die than cause trouble in your family."

"Then you won't have me, Gladys? and you mean to send me back to sea again, and to make me return to my wild ways, and to make my mother miserable?"

"Och hone! what will I do! Why do you say such things to me, Mr. Owen, who have never done you any harm? I cannot marry—I cannot do what would be wicked and ungrateful—I will go away again back to old Ireland, and

not cause trouble to those who have been so good to me."

"No, you will not do anything of the kind, unless you wish me to go after you. I shall tell my father that I will be off to sea again, and then I need not trouble you any more."

"I will not stay, Mr. Owen, to make mischief; so if you will only please to stop at home with your parents, I will go away."

"I shall not please to do anything of the kind, for I only stayed so long on your account, and this is the reward I get."

Owen was in a passion, and vainly striving to keep it down. His face was flushed, he looked angrily and moodily upon the drooping head of Gladys as it bent lower and lower over the poor cow upon which she was leaning. He suddenly seized her hand and exclaimed,

"I am not used to be refused in this cool sort of way, and I don't believe there ever was a woman in the world who doesn't wish to get married to some one or other. Now whether you mean to have me or not is not the question I am going to ask; but whether you have any

other lover, or ever had one that you prefer to me. Tell me this and I shall be satisfied."

Gladys tried to draw away her hand from the impetuous young man, but he held it fast.

"You needn't be afraid; I would not hurt a hair of your head. But if you knew what I am feeling now at this moment you would tell me the truth. Will you answer me a few questions honestly?"

"Yes, Mr. Owen, if I can without doing or saying what is wrong."

Owen looked Gladys again in the face, as she slightly raised her head to answer his question. Why that burning blush? Why those bright, expressive eyes, if she did not care for him? For a moment he had hope, and pressed the hand he held. Again she bent over the cow that divided them, and tried to withdraw her hand.

At any other time Owen would have laughed at the notion of making an offer, divided from his beloved by a fine Alderney cow, but now he was too much in earnest for laughing.

"Gladys, do you love my brother Rowland?" he asked.

Gladys now looked at him in unfeigned astonishment as she answered.

"No, Mr. Owen; surely I have never given you reason to suppose so. A grand gentleman like him!"

"But there is a still grander of whom I am jealous," continued Owen. "Colonel Vaughan, I have often seen him here upon every excuse—and always to look at you. I have seen him, and know it well. Do you care for this great gentleman?"

"Oh! no, Sir," said Gladys, sadly. "How can you suspect me of such a thing? Are my manners so forward, or am I so foolish as to let any one suppose I could think of people so far above me? This is not kind, Mr. Owen."

"One more, Gladys. Those beneath you then. You cannot, I feel you cannot, think of that gardener or footman at the Park, or of young Gwillim, the Half Moon, or—there are so many who admire you Gladys."

"Oh! no, Sir, I do not think so; no one says so to me, and I care for none of them. Now, I had better go, if you please, Mr. Owen—my mistress will be wanting me."

"I should think she 'ould, seure enough," said a stentorian voice, as Mr. Prothero entered the cow-house, having just heard the last words, and seen the clasped hands.

Gladys looked entreatingly at Owen, who at once said, "It was my fault that she stayed here, I kept her against her will."

Gladys glanced gratefully at Owen, and left him with his father; but before she was out of hearing, the Farmer's loud voice was audible, informing Owen that he "didn't want another 'lopement from his house; and that that Irish beggar should leave the place."

"It was all chance father, and my fault," said Owen.

"It's always chance and your fault then. Where Gladys is, you're seure to be pretty near. She's a good sort of young 'ooman enough, but you have no call to be for ever hunting after her."

"I don't see why I shouldn't if I like. It doesn't hurt any body, and is only kind to her."

"But I don't cheuse her to be thinking you're going to make love to her, and by-and-bye,

perhaps, expecting to—, there's no knowing what young 'oomen may expect."

"She isn't one to expect very much, and I am sure she doesn't take any liberties with any one, or go beyond her place."

"Treue for you there; but that's no fault of yours. You don't take notice of any other female that I see, and seure you eused to make love to them all in turns."

"I don't see any girl half as good as Gladys, or worthy to light a candle to her, that's why I have given them all up."

"Name o' goodness what for? If you are going to make a fool of yourself about her, I'll soon send her away, and stop that any how."

"You may save yourself the trouble, father, for I am going away myself. I can't be a land-lubber any longer, and I won't, so I shall look out for a ship, pretty soon."

"All because that girl came here to bother us. Deet to goodness, them Irishers have been the plagues of my life ever since I married."

"But she's Welsh, father, and you said so yourself."

"She's a mongrel, and no good ever came out of them."

"She saved mother's life, anyhow."

This reflection posed the worthy Farmer. He softened somewhat in his reply.

"Treue for you again there. But that's no reason for your going to sea, just when your'e getting euseful here."

"Well, father, thank you for saying for once in my life that I'm useful. You never said that before."

"And it don't seem out of any great favour to us that you are euseful now; but only to please an Irish beggar."

"I tell you what, father, if you were anybody else you should'nt call her an Irish beggar."

As Gladys went on her way, she heard the voices, ever louder and louder; she hurried into the house, and then to her own little bed-room, where she still seemed to hear the words, "Irish beggar," and a little spark of the pride of poor human nature kindled in her heart.

"They shall not quarrel about me—they shall not throw my misery after me—they shall not

think I want to marry him—I will go away," were her muttered expressions.

"Why have I lived—why have I been kindly treated? if I am to be the sport, and the by-word of my friends! A poor out-cast—an Irish beggar—a lone girl, friendless, homeless, heartless, wretched, miserable! Och hone, what will I do! what will I do!"

She threw herself on her bed, and sobbed.

"And I only want to do my duty—to show my gratitude—to die for the mistress if needs be, and they will think me forward and vain. Why was I born to cause trouble and to bear such misery! Oh! mother, mother, if you were here to comfort your poor child! If I could but go after you, if I could but go away to my mother and all the lost ones!"

This thought of her mother and the lost ones seemed to overpower her for a few seconds, and then to calm her. She rose from her bed, and fell upon her knees and prayed.

"I can go to them, if they cannot come to me. I can fill my place of sorrow, as is best for me. I need not bring trouble on this blessed

home! I will not. I need not send away that kind Mr. Owen from his family. I will not. Why does he think of a poor, wretched being like me? Why has he been so good to me; so tender to me—as if he were my brother? If I go away, he will think of some one else, and make them all happy here, and live with them, and be good and steady. And I shall be only one sufferer instead of many. May God bless them all! I will go away, but never to see him more!—never, never!" Thus thought Gladys. For half-an-hour, whilst she was striving to calm herself, such thoughts and thousands of others flitted through her mind; but she did not murmur again at the sad lot which had been assigned to her by Providence; she had gathered strength in that prayer which she had offered up out of her trouble of heart. Still she felt aggrieved by her master's hard words, knowing as she did that she did not deserve them; but she struggled hard to conquer that pride which she knew ill-became one in her dependent and friendless state.

When she had sufficiently recovered herself, she went down to prepare the supper, according

to her custom. She found the hall empty, and wondered what had become of her master and mistress. She glanced into the garden, and saw them walking up and down engaged in earnest conversation, although the hour was late and it was getting dark and chill. She felt that they were talking about her. She would not listen, and returned to spread the table for their evening meal; whilst doing so, Owen made his appearance.

"Gladys," he said, "shake hands with me, and forgive me for causing you pain, I hope it will be the first and last time."

Gladys held out her hand, saying, "Oh, Mr. Owen, I have nothing to forgive, I am only very sorry."

As Owen held her hand, in stalked Mr. Prothero, followed by his wife. He was not looking very well pleased when he entered, but finding them together, his dark frowning brow became still darker.

"Good night, mother," said Owen, "I don't want any supper. Good night, father," he added with a strong effort, but receiving no response, he left the room.

Gladys longed to follow his example, but feared it would not be right.

"Gladys, I fear you are not well," said Mrs. Prothero gravely, but kindly, "perhaps you would like to go to bed."

"Thank you, Ma'am," said Gladys, glancing furtively at her mistress, whose gentle face looked perplexed and anxious.

"Good night, then," said Mrs. Prothero.

Gladys could not speak, for there was something constrained in the manners of her dear mistress, that she could not bear to see. She did not venture to speak to Mr. Prothero, but dropping him a silent curtsey, as she left the room, went to bed, but not to sleep.

That night, Mrs. Prothero went to her son Owen's room, and heard the history of the evening. He told her that he loved Gladys, but that she did not care for him; and that his father would not believe him when he said so. Mrs. Prothero gave him a maternal lecture on his conduct, and the impossibility of his marrying Gladys, particularly whilst his father was so irritated against his sister. She rallied him, in a quiet way, on his various pre-

vious loves, and said that she had no doubt he would forget his present one in the same manner.

She was struck with the unusually grave tone of his reply, as he simply said, that if Gladys were like his other loves, he might forget her in the same way; but as she was quite different from any one he had ever liked before, so he should remember her as he had never before remembered any one. She was also struck with his manner of wishing her good night, and of recommending Gladys to her care, entreating her not to be less kind to her than she had always been, because he had the misfortune to love her.

Mrs. Prothero promised all he desired, scarcely believing, as she did so, in the depth of his affection.

"And, mother fach," he said, "you must not be vexed if I run away again to cure myself. There is nothing like sea air for my disease; and if I do, I promise to write regularly, and to come home at the end of my voyage. Only be kind to Gladys, and don't let her go away."

Owen had a presentiment, that if he did not leave Glanaravon, Gladys would.

"And you must try to bring father round by degrees; I don't want to annoy him, and I know you are as fond of Gladys as if she were your own daughter, and father likes her, too. Will you try, mother?"

"Anything to keep you at home, and steady, my son," said Mrs. Prothero with tears in her eyes, "but you must not go away again, we cannot do without you."

"Only this once, for change of air; I assure you it is best."

"Well, we will talk of this again, Owen; good night and God bless you."

"Just tell father not to be angry, with me or Gladys, and that I can't run away with her, because she wont have me. Good night, mother dear."

Again Owen kissed his mother, more lovingly than usual, and so they parted for the night.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FUGITIVE.

GLADYS did not go to bed all that night. If her mistress could have watched her occupations, seen her tears, and listened to her prayers, she would, at least, have known that she was grateful. The first thing she did was to finish a cap that she had been making for her, the next to complete a large piece of ornamental netting, that had been long in secret progress, and had been intended as a present for that dear mistress's birthday on the morrow. The third, last and most difficult, was to write a letter. Gladys usually wrote easily and well. She had been accustomed to assist her father at an early age, and had been carefully taught by her mother, but on the present occasion she con-

sidered every sentence with a too painful thoughtfulness, and literally blotted her writing with her tears.

Morning was beginning to dawn before she had finished these tasks, and then she washed her face and hands, took off the pretty cotton gown she had on, and put on the one Netta gave her when first she came to Glanaravon. An old straw hat that she had been in the habit of wearing in the fields, and a tidy, but plain shawl, completed her attire She had a few shillings which Mr. Prothero had given her, and these she put into her pocket, together with a pincushion, and a curious foreign shell, gifts of Owen.

She thought of Netta, and of her very different flight from the same house; she fancied that if she had been in her place, no lover, however dear could have prevailed upon her to leave so good a mother; but she was different. An orphan and a beggar, she had no right to remain to cause dissention between father and son.

And so she fell upon her knees, and prayed for blessings on every member of that family;

she forgot no one, not even poor Owen whose suit she had rejected. Most especially she prayed that he might be a comfort to his parents, and turn from his wild, wandering ways, to those of rest and sobriety; she particularly used that latter word, which would have sounded formal in less earnest lips.

With tearful eyes, and throbbing heart, but with a resigned spirit, she rose from her knees, took her little bundle in her hand, and went quickly out into the passage. She did not trust herself to pass the doors of her slumbering friends, but went by the back stair-case into the kitchen, and thence into the yard. There was a thick mist over the face of nature, falling like a heavy veil on the rising sun, and making the early day but a lengthened night; not a sound was heard, not an animal had yet been aroused from sleep, save Lion, the large watch-dog, whose duty it was to wake when others slept, and he bounded towards Gladys, and her suppressed, "down Lion, down," failed to quiet him. As she hurried up the road, he ran after her, and it was not until she reached the gate, that she had courage to command him with

heightened voice, and threatening manner, to go home. The dog crouched, and then licked the hand, upraised to send him back. Poor Gladys fell upon his neck, and burst into tears. He licked off the tears with a wistful, canine earnestness and love, and again prepared to follow her.

"Back, good dog! Home, Lion!" said Gladys.

The dog turned away with his tail between his legs, and walked half-way down the road. Gladys hurried through the gate, and along the public road, shutting the gate behind her upon Lion. No sooner was she out of sight than the tail was again in motion, the head turned, and Lion was peering over the hedge after her. As she swiftly pursued her way, turning neither to the right nor to the left, she did not perceive the faithful friend that was literally dogging her steps; but still Lion followed; and thoughtless of master and mistress at home, kept in view the poor beggar-girl who had managed to win his love, together with that of all the animal kind around and about Glanaravon.

Thus pursuing her unknown way, and thus

pursued by Lion, we must leave Gladys and return to the Farm.

At the usual hour, Mrs. Prothero came down to breakfast; no Gladys was visible, and no neat table was laid for the early meal. Mrs. Prothero asked the servants if they had seen Gladys, and they said she had not yet come down; not altogether ill-pleased to find the favourite, for once, in fault. Mrs. Prothero thought that the events of the past night had probably made her ill; and relenting from her somewhat severe feelings towards her, she went up-stairs to see what was the matter. Receiving no answer to her tap at the door, and call of "Gladys," she went into her little room. She saw all neat as usual, and the bed unruffled. Her heart misgave her, and she painfully remembered the morning of Netta's flight. As if by instinct, she went to the small dressing-table, and at once had her fears confirmed. Very sadly she took up the pretty cap that was left there, and looked at the large piece of netting, to which was appended a paper. She unpinned the paper, and read the following words, "For my dear mistress, with respectful wishes,

and best prayers for many happy returns of the day."

Mrs. Prothero unfolded the work slowly, and saw two handsome, long, netted window curtains, with a fancy border, that must have taken hours from the donor's sleep to accomplish. As she unfolded them, a letter fell upon the floor.

Poor, nervous Mrs. Prothero, rubbed her hands over one another several times before she had the courage to pick it up, and then she scarcely dared to open it. As she made the attempt, however, a cry of "Mother! mother! why isn't my breakfast ready?" was heard from the foot of the stairs, proceeding from Mr. Prothero's lusty voice, who was too proud and too angry to call for Gladys.

Mrs Prothero ran down stairs with the letter in her hand.

"My dear David, I am afraid Gladys is gone," she said, tremblingly.

"Well, let her go," said the Farmer. "A good riddance. But what do you mean?"

Mrs. Prothero told of the empty room, unused bed, cap, curtains, and letter.

"This house is bewitched!" said Mr. Prothero. "What's in the letter?"

"Indeed, I don't know, Davy bach!" said the wife, giving him the document.

Mr. Prothero took out his glasses, wiped them deliberately, and put them on, whilst his wife stood before him rubbing her poor little hands, as usual.

"What a good hand the girl writes," said Mr. Prothero, as he carefully unfolded the letter, and then began to read aloud as follows:—

"Dear and honoured mistress,

"Before leaving for ever your blessed home, I beg you will allow me to write you a few lines, and I hope you will not think me too bold in so doing. I am going away, because I would not cause trouble to you, or my good, kind master. May it please God to bless you both for ever and ever! As long as I live I shall pray for you and love you! If I am too bold, forgive me, but my heart is full. I can only thank you for all you have done for me, by my prayers! Farewell! my dear, kind, honoured mistress and master. You will be rewarded in this world for

your care of the poor orphan, who prays to meet you in the next.

"GLADYS."

It was evident that the writer had been obliged to conclude hastily, because her paper was so wet with tears that she could write no more.

When Mr. Prothero finished reading, he hemmed two or three times and cleared his throat, and took off his spectacles and wiped them; then perceiving that his wife was crying like a child, he said—

"Don't be so fullish!" Suddenly recollecting himself, he exclaimed, "Where's Owen? Go you, mother, and see if we hav'nt had another 'lopement."

"No fear of that," said Mrs. Prothero, leaving the room to do her husband's bidding.

She stayed so long, that Mr. Prothero, out of patience, bustled after her. He found her standing before an open, half-empty chest of drawers. The room was very untidy, and here, also, the bed had not been slept in the past night.

Mrs. Prothero was rubbing her hands and crying pitifully; more from fear of her husband's wrath than from sorrow for Owen, because she had anticipated a sudden flight.

Mr. Prothero began to stamp with rage. It was a long time before he could speak, and his wife had a certain fear that he would choke. At last words found vent.

"The impudent, lying, hypocritical, young baggage! The ungrateful, disobedient, good-for-nothing brute! Ach a fi! upon 'em both. That's what you get by harbouring Irish beggars!—that's the return they make! A pale-faced, deceitful hussey!"

"Davey bach! they are not gone together," said Mrs. Prothero, half-believing at the same time that they were.

"Shall I lay breakfast, Ma'am?" interrupted Shanno, putting her head in at the door and grinning suspiciously.

"Go your way, and mind your own business," said Mr. Prothero.

Shanno disappeared.

"I'll go out and see whether either of the

horses is gone. Go you and make breakfast—the good-for-nothing—"

"Just let me tell you first what Owen said to me last night," said Mrs. Prothero. "I don't think he ever deceived us, Davy; and if he did wrong, he was never the one to hide it."

"Treue for you! Well, what did the young scamp say? I don't blame him half as much as that meek, pale-faced, still-water thing, who's as deep as the north star, I'll be bound."

"But Owen told me, seriously, that she refused to have anything to say to him, and begged me to be kind to her when he was gone away, for his sake."

"Nothing but a trap to take you in—the deceitful young puppies—the—the—"

"Go and look about the horses and I'll make breakfast."

He went accordingly. All the horses were safe. Nothing was missing anywhere but Lion.

"I 'ouldn't take twenty pounds for that dog," said Mr. Prothero when he returned to the house, and sat down to breakfast.

"Hadn't we better send to look for them?" asked Mrs. Prothero, timidly.

"I'll see 'em hanged first. What! go and make another hullabaloo all through the country, as if one wasn't enough in one house. No, not I. Let 'em go to sea, or where they will; but don't tell anybody anything about 'em. Let people think what they will; I only wish I was at the world's end. But it's all your fault. Do you remember that morning when you bothered me into letting the girl stay. Fine things have come of it, seure enough."

"But we don't know that they're together."

"But we do, I say, Mrs. Prothero; or why should they go off together. Fine things, indeed, for the gossips! Two 'lopements from one house. The young hussy."

Mrs. Prothero could not help crying. To lose them both at once—a son and one who had been better than a daughter to her—it was too sad—and to feel so uncertain as to what would become of them!

Mr. Prothero was resolved to take no notice of her tears, but hastily swallowed his breakfast and went out. The servants did not need to be asked about the fugitives. They were all sure that they had run away together. Gladys,

good and quiet as she seemed, was deep enough; and they had managed so well that nobody had seen them! Not like Miss Netta, who was so open! Many had seen her when she ran away!

Mrs. Prothero sent one of the men off in a search for Lion, feeling sure that if he were found, Gladys would be discovered.

At about eleven o'clock, to Mrs. Prothero's great delight, Miss Gwynne and Miss Hall called to see if the report about Owen and Gladys were true, and to hear what Mrs. Prothero thought of it. Miss Gwynne was highly indignant.

"You cannot believe it, Mrs. Prothero. That girl Gladys would no more run away with any man living than I would. If Mr. Prothero won't send after her I will. Where is he?"

"Shall I send and tell him you want to speak to him?"

"By all means—directly."

Mr. Prothero was soon in the house again, at Miss Gwynne's bidding. He looked more than usually red and excited.

"Mr. Prothero, I would stake my life upon it, that girl has not gone off with your son. I don't like the Irish, or their beggars more than you do; but I am very fond of Gladys, and she shall not lose her character, or die of starvation whilst I have a horse to send after her, or a shilling to help her."

"That's very well for you, Miss Gwynne, but Owen is no relation of yours; and I don't cheuse him to marry an Irish beggar. This house is bewitched, and my children are bewitched, all except Rowland."

Miss Gwynne wondered what Mr. Prothero would think of *him* if he knew all.

"Well, Mr. Prothero, will you send after Gladys, or shall I? You needn't have her back here. There is the situation of schoolmistress or lady's maid for her at once. I will take her in either capacity."

"Indeed, Mr. Prothero," said Miss Hall, "I think you may trust Gladys; that letter is sincere if ever anything was."

"Who is to search, for there is no time to lose?" asked Miss Gwynne.

She was the only person in Wales who would

have moved Mr. Prothero, but he never could refuse her anything.

"What you say, Miss, is seure to have sense in it. I never knew you take to any one yet who wasn't worth something, so I'll just ride myself and look after 'em both. I shouldn't like people to fancy we were in a fuss and fright. But remember, Miss Gwynne, it is to oblige you; and if I find that she has run away with my son—"

"You may do what you like, Mr. Prothero, for then I will have nothing to say to her. But go at once, and thank you very much."

"I'll go Swansea way, for I am sure they'll take to the sea. Ach a fi! what's gone to the young people."

In less than a quarter of an hour, Mr. Prothero had mounted his best mare, and muttering a great many Welsh oaths, was soon riding in search of the fugitives. When he got out of his own immediate neighbourhood, he began to ask whether "a tall, dark, young man, and a tall, pale, young 'ooman" had been seen.

"Is it a couple of gipsies, Mr. Prothero?" asked a farmer, who lived about seven miles

from Glanaravon. "I did see a dark man, and a sallow 'ooman go up the lane by now."

"Was the man like my son Owen?"

"Well, I didn't be seeing his face, but I shouldn't wonder."

Up the lane Mr. Prothero went for a good half mile, and at last reached a gipsey encampment, where there were plenty of dark men, and sallow women, but not Owen and Gladys.

A shrewd old gipsey, seeing him evidently on the search for some one, assured him before he had asked any questions, that she had seen whom he was looking for.

"Where?" asked the Farmer.

"Cross my hand with a silver coin, and I'll tell ye," she said.

He gave her a shilling.

"Young couple, my lord?" asked the woman.

Mr. Prothero nodded assent.

"Dark and fair, yer honour?"

Another nod.

"I never tell secrets under half a crown, but I have seen them, Sir. Young man something like you, and handsome."

"Make haste and tell, you cheat and vagabond," said Mr. Prothero, throwing her eighteen pence.

"Up the first turning to the right, off the road, over the hill," said the woman.

"When?"

"An hour ago."

Mr. Prothero rode quickly down the lane, along the turnpike, up the first turning to the right, and then up a long and tedious hill.

It will be unnecessary to describe how Mr. Prothero wandered over this hill for hours, without finding those he sought. As the said hill was a short cut to the road to Swansea, whither he was persuaded they were gone, it is not much to be wondered at that he was taken in, and that he went on as fast as his good horse would go for many a long mile; but he found neither Owen nor Gladys, and all his enquiries after them were fruitless.

Towards evening he returned home, tired and very cross, and found his good wife looking anxious and unhappy, and ready to say at any moment, "dear, dear, how I do miss Gladys."

A messenger from the Park was awaiting him, with a note from Miss Gwynne, enquiring whether he had found the poor girl or not. He was obliged to write a few respectful lines in reply, to inform her of the failure of his search.

"I wish we had never set eyes on the girl, he muttered, as he was writing the note with much pains and some difficulty. "To take off Owen, too, just as he was getting euseful, and he such a good writer and accountant."

Still more heartily did he repeat that wish several times during the night. Mrs. Prothero could not sleep, and what with her anxiety about Gladys, sorrow for the departure of Owen, and longing to see her own daughter, her mind was excited beyond its wont. As is often the case under such circumstances, she fancied she heard all kinds of noises in the house; once she was sure some one was coming upstairs, and another time that there was a tapping at the front door. She crept softly out of bed, and half fancying she should find Gladys without, went down stairs, and opened it. Nothing was visible but the flickering moonbeams amongst

the trees, or audible save the tinkling of the brook through the farm-yard.

"Name o' goodness, what's the matter now?" ejaculated the Farmer, as the creaking of the bed-room door awoke him.

"Don't be angry, Davy bach, but I can't sleep for thinking of that poor girl; maybe she's without a roof to cover her."

"Owen 'll see to that. 'Tis a hard case a man mayn't sleep in his bed, because of a good-for-nothing wench like that."

The next morning, after breakfast, when Mrs. Prothero was urging him once more to look for Gladys, and he was vehemently refusing, Miss Gwynne and Miss Hall again made their appearance.

Mr. Prothero had to swallow a very broad expression of disgust, as well as to listen politely to that young lady, who persisted in saying she would continue the search for Gladys if he would not.

"I am sorry to annoy you, Mr. Prothero," she said, "but it is due to Gladys to clear her character; there are plenty of jealous people about us, quite ready to take it away. I do

not wish you to take any more trouble in this matter, but I cannot let it rest until I find the poor girl. She shall come to me direct, and need not be an eye-sore to you. I will send off in every direction until I find her."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Gwynne. If she is to be found, I must do it. I 'ont have a talk made about our turning her out of doors, and such like. As she isn't gone Glamorganshire way, I suppose she must be gone towards Ireland, and I had best follow that scent. I'll give her one more turn, and then have done with her. Mother, if I don't come home to-night, don't be frightened, as she may have gone a good step."

Mr. Prothero was leaving the room, when Miss Hall stopped him, saying,

"I thought, Mr. Prothero, that you might not have seen this notice of a meeting in your son's parish, and as he is mentioned, I brought over the paper for you."

Mr. Prothero thanked Miss Hall, and took out his spectacles. Whilst he was wiping them, however, Miss Hall read from the 'Times,' the report of a meeting for forming

a ragged school in Rowland's parish, in which was the following paragraph, "The Reverend Rowland Prothero, curate of the parish, made a very clear and able speech upon the subject, and brought forward a well digested plan for the school, which will probably be adopted. The thanks of the meeting were offered to him."

"There is always a pleasure with every pain," said Mrs. Prothero wiping her eyes. "Thank you,Miss Hall."

"And the Bishop of London was in the chair. So, mother, if he isn't a bishop himself, you see, he's been very near one," said Mr. Prothero, looking very much gratified. "Well, I'll go now, Miss Gwynne, and look after that confounded—I beg your pardon, Miss—after that Irish jade," and he went accordingly, leaving the ladies to talk it over with his wife.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FRIEND.

Mr. Prothero started as soon as his horse was ready, and, it must be confessed, in a very bad temper. As soon as he got out of the precincts of Glanaravon, he began to make inquiries of everyone he met, and at every cottage he passed, concerning Gladys. It was evident, from the replies that he received, that if she had gone that road, it was so early in the morning that no one had seen her.

At last he fell in with a farmer's wife, whom he knew, who was jogging along on horseback, with a little boy behind her. After the usual greetings, he said,

"You never come to Glanaravon now, Mrs.

Davies. I daresay you haven't seen any of our folk for a year?"

"Well, not exactly. But I almost fancied I saw that pretty young 'ooman that lives with you yesterday morning. She was too shabby, or I should have been sure of the face. Only when she saw me, she turned away, and went on."

"Which way?"

"Oh, down the Carmarthen road, seure."

"You'll excuse my hurrying on, Mrs. Davies; I want to call at Lewis, Dryslwyn."

"To be seure. Good morning, Mr. Prothero."

The worthy farmer rode off at a gallop, till he was more than out of sight of Mrs. Davies. He stopped at a tidy cottage, to speak to an old woman who was washing at the door.

"Did you chance to see a strange young 'ooman go by here yesterday, early?" he asked.

"What young 'ooman?" was the rejoinder.

"Rather shabbily dressed, with blue eyes, and a very pale face?"

"Had she a big black dog along, Sir?" asked a boy who came from within the house.

"I think she had."

"Then granny gave her a cup of tea when she asked for some water, and I gave the dog a piece of my bread and cheese," said the boy.

"There's sixpence for you, my lad," said Mr. Prothero. "Was there a young man with the girl?"

"Nobody was along, Sir."

"Which way did she go."

"By there, to Dryslwyn, Sir?"

Mr. Prothero rode on to the picturesque village bearing this name. The old ruined castle looked down upon him, from its curiously formed, tumulus-looking elevation, as he stopped before a neat farm-house.

"Good morning, Mrs. Lewis."

"Walk in, Mr. Prothero. We were talking of you by now. There was a young 'ooman by here yesterday, and John Lewis said he was seure she had your dog with her. She went away so fast, that I hadn't time to ask about the dog."

"Which way did she go?"

"Down the Carmarthen road."

"Good morning, Mrs. Lewis, thank you. I must look after my dog."

Mr. Prothero found it easiest to ask for the girl with a large black dog, and traced them to within a mile of Carmarthen.

He stopped at a small roadside inn to have a glass of *cwrw da.** Here he asked the landlady of Gladys.

"See her and the dog! Is seure. They come here in the evening, and she asked for a slice of bread and a drink of water, and took out sixpence to pay for it. She gave all the bread to the dog, and my master, who is fond of dogs, told me to give 'em both a good supper. Poor dear! She couldn't help crying, and my master, who is tender-hearted when he sees a girl do be crying, tell me to give her and the dog a good supper and a bed in the barn, which I did, is seure."

Mr. Prothero paid handsomely for his ale, and having learnt that Gladys and Lion went straight to Carmarthen, went thither also. He made some few enquiries at the small inns that he passed, but gained no information. He accordingly rode through the town, and took

* Good ale.

the direct route to Hob's Point, whence, he knew, she would probably sail for Ireland.

The afternoon was far advanced, still he rode on. He began to feel as anxious as he was angry and annoyed, and declared to himself that he wouldn't turn back until he had found her. He soon began to track her again. All the little boys on the way had noticed the big dog, and could point out the route he and Gladys had pursued.

He stopped at one cottage where the mistress told him that she had made the girl sit down in the porch, because she looked so tired; and at another where she had asked how far it was to Pembrokeshire.

He had ridden about thirty miles, and twilight was creeping on. He began to think of the necessity of finding a night's lodging, and once more consigned Gladys and the Irish generally to any distant region where he should never see them again.

"If she hadn't nursed mother so tenderly," he muttered to himself, "I'd turn back now; but as she does seem to be running away from Owen, and not with him, it 'ould be creuel."

The moon, the young May moon arose in the heavens, and the Farmer quickened his pace, for he knew the road, and that he was a good way from an inn, or, indeed, from any habitation where he could ask a night's lodging. Lights peeped out, one by one from the cottages as he passed, and when he glanced into them, and saw the cheerful little fires, he thought more compassionately of Gladys, and wondered whether she had found food and lodging for the night.

He was within a mile of a small village that he knew very well, when it was about ten o'clock. The wind blew rather keenly, and he buttoned up his great-coat, and began to whistle, by way of keeping himself warm.

"Come, old girl! we shall soon have something to eat! come along," he said to his mare, as he gave her a slight touch with his whip.

He was passing by a very lonely quarry in a field by the road-side, about which he had heard some ugly stories of robbers and ghosts, years ago. Although he was a courageous, he was a superstitious man, and gave his mare another stroke as he encouraged her to proceed. She

started, however, suddenly, and made a kind of halt. The moon was shining so brightly that Mr. Prothero could see into the quarry across the hedge, and he fancied he perceived somebody moving about. He urged his horse on by whip and voice, but as he did so, some one jumped over the gate that led into the quarry, and made towards him. He was so much alarmed that he spurred the mare vigorously. He was sure it was a robber. He turned his whip, and held the heavy handle ready for a blow, which fell, in effect on the robber or ghost, or whatever it was, that leapt upon his leg, and seemed, to his imagination, to lay hold of it.

A loud howl, and then a sharp, joyous bark, however, soon told him who the intruder was, and gave him courage to encounter the jumpings and gambols of his own good dog, Lion.

The mare kicked, and Mr. Prothero exclaimed, "Lion! Lion! down, good dog, down! Don't upset me, Lion bach. Let me get off Lion! Name o'goodness be quiet, dog! There! now you may jump as you will! Where is she? Where's Gladys?"

Mr. Prothero was off his horse; and Lion was over the hedge in a moment. The former climbed the gate somewhat less speedily—and both were in a few seconds in the quarry, where, either dead or asleep lay Gladys, beneath and upon the hard stones.

As the rays of the moon fell upon her pale face, Mr. Prothero almost thought it was death and not sleep; but when Lion began to bark joyously, and to lick the cold hands and cheek, and when Mr. Prothero ventured to stoop down, and whisper, "Gladys! Gladys!" and to take one of the damp, clammy hands in his, the white eyelids unclosed, and with a little scream of terror the poor girl started up.

There, beneath the moonlight she recognized her master, and falling down on her knees before him, clasped her hands, but uttered no word.

Where was Mr. Prothero's ready-prepared lecture on ingratitude? Where were the questions about Owen? Where was the passion of the previous day? He could not tell. He only knew that he raised the poor kneeling girl, kindly, almost tenderly. She threw her arms

round him, and for the first time kissed him as if he were her father. Then, suddenly, recollecting herself, she exclaimed,—"Oh! Master! Oh, Sir! forgive me."

Her master did not speak, but lifted her in his strong arms, and carried her to the gate; lifted her over; lifted her on his horse, and amidst the joyous caperings of Lion, mounted himself.

"Put you your arms round me, and hold fast," he said to Gladys.

"Come you, Lion, good dog! we'll have a supper by now!" And so they all went, as fast as they could to the neighbouring village.

Mr. Prothero, with no small noise and bluster, knocked up the inmates of the little inn of that little place, and succeeded in getting Gladys ensconced by a cheerful fire in the kitchen. The poor girl was benumbed with cold and overpowered with fatigue. The landlady rubbed her feet and hands, administered hot brandy and water, and finally got her to bed.

Mr. Prothero kept out of her way lest he should say something that he might afterwards

repent of in the warmth of his delight at finding her again. After she was in bed, and he had heard from the landlady that she seemed better and more comfortable, he and Lion had a good supper—a meal, the dog appeared thoroughly to enjoy, and which he ate with a ravenous appetite.

Mr. Prothero told the landlady to leave Gladys in bed the next morning until nine o'clock, by which hour he supposed she would be sufficiently refreshed, and then retired himself, feeling thankful to Miss Gwynne for having made him do a good action, but still believing that Owen must have been in the secret of Gladys' sudden flight.

Gladys slept soundly until the landlady took her a good breakfast at nine o'clock. She then awoke, refreshed but frightened, and uncertain as to her present state, or future proceedings. She was told that Mr. Prothero wished to see her as soon as she was dressed, and accordingly when she had eaten her breakfast, she got up. She felt very stiff and weak, and her hands trembled so much that she could scarcely dress herself.

Lion found her out, however, and gained admittance into her bed-room. He was in such very boisterous spirits, that he quite cheered her, as pale and frightened she tried to gain courage to meet her master. Before she left the bed-room, she sought for guidance where she was always in the habit of going for help and comfort, and found strength "according to her day."

Mr. Prothero was waiting for her in the little parlour of the inn. During the morning, having nothing to do, he had employed himself by getting up his temper, and persuading himself that he ought to be very angry with Gladys. He had quite slept off his softer feelings, and whilst at his lonely breakfast had gone through an imaginary quarrel with Owen, and a dispute with his wife, which had so raised his choler, that when Gladys entered he was as red as he usually was when in a passion at home.

Gladys saw that he was angry and trembled very much; but she knew that she had done no wrong, and tried to re-assure herself.

Mr. Prothero began at once. It must be remarked, however, that he had previously

learnt from the landlady that Gladys was pretty well, and had eaten a good breakfast.

"Name o' goodness, young 'ooman, what did you run away from our house for, in such a sly, underhand way, and give us all this trouble and bother? Don't suppose I 'ould a run after you, if it wasn't for Miss Gwynne and your mistress."

"Oh, Sir, I am very thankful to ye and to them. I know I don't deserve such kindness."

"Treue for you there. I should have thought you'd have known that one 'lopement was quite enough from one house. Pray what have you done with my son Owen?"

"I, Sir! Nothing, Sir!" said Gladys, trembling at this abrupt question.

Lion licked her hand as if to reassure her.

"You needn't tell no lies about it, because I shall be seure to find out. Where is he gone?"

"Indeed—indeed, I don't know, Sir. I thought he was at home at Glanaravon."

"But he isn't at home. He went off with you."

"Oh, not with me, Sir—not with me, I as-

sure you. I went away that he might stay, and that I might not cause anger between you. I am speaking the truth, Sir, indeed I am."

Mr. Prothero looked at the agitated girl, and felt inclined to believe her.

"Tell me why you went away at all then?"

"Because Mr. Owen said to me words that I knew he would be sorry for, and because I saw that you, Sir, were displeased at what he said about me."

"What did he say to you? Tell me the truth."

"He said, Sir—oh! I cannot tell. Perhaps you would be more angry with him if you knew."

Gladys' head drooped low, and a burning blush overspread her pale face.

"I can't be much more angry with him than I am, but tell you the treuth. Did he want to marry you?"

"Yes, Sir."

"And you—what did you say?"

"That I could'nt marry any one in this world, Sir."

"What do you mean to wait for, then?"

"Nothing, Sir, nobody."

"And what did Owen say to that?"

"I don't think anything more particular passed between us. He was very kind, Sir."

"I daresay. But what made him go away?"

"I think it must have been because he thought you would send me away."

"And you don't want to marry my son Owen?"

"No, Sir." Gladys' voice wavered slightly as she said this.

"Ha, ha! He's a fine young man, however."

"Yes, Sir, and very kind."

"I daresay. Will you promise never to marry him?"

As Mr. Prothero asked this question, he looked Gladys full in the face.

She blushed again, but returned his gaze with a quiet, grave look, that seemed to wonder at the question. She did not reply at once, and Mr. Prothero repeated it, louder than before, with the additional one of "Do you hear, girl?"

"Sir, I don't like to make promises," said Gladys, "suppose the temptation to break it ever came, and proved too strong for me. I might perjure myself."

"Then you mean to marry my son, Owen?"

"No, Sir, I don't think I shall ever marry him. As far as I can see now, I am sure I never shall."

"Name o' goodness, what does the girl mean? You don't mean to marry him, and yet you 'ont promise—what do you mean?"

"I scarcely know myself, Sir. But I cannot tell what God may appoint for me in the future, and so I cannot make a solemn promise."

"Then I 'spose you're going to run off like Netta?"

"No, Sir, never."

"Why, no, Sir, if you 'ont promise."

"Because I could never do what you and my mistress would dislike."

"Then you can promise, perhaps, never to marry my son Owen without my consent."

"Yes, Sir, I can—do—that—"

Gladys said these words very slowly, and

turned very pale as she said them. She clasped her hands firmly together with a visible effort.

"Well, you're an odd girl; you 'ont promise one thing, and yet you as good as promise it in another way. What's the difference?"

Again the colour came and went.

"It would be wrong, Sir, in me to make a son disobey a father, and I wouldn't like to do it; so I can promise that; and maybe you may change."

"Then you love the boy? Tell me the treuth."

Gladys began to cry, and was a few moments before she could say, somewhat more resolutely than usual—

"Sir, my feelings are my own. Mr. Owen has been like a brother to me, and the mistress like a mother—and you—oh, Sir! should I not love his mother's son?"

Mr. Prothero was touched; he could ask no more questions.

"There, there—go you and get ready directly. I promised Miss Gwynne to bring you back to Glanaravon, where she means to make you

school-mistress and lady's maid, and all the rest. I suppose you don't want to go to Ireland?"

"No, Sir."

"Have you any relations there?"

"No, Sir."

"You don't want to leave Glanaravon parish?"

"No, Sir. I would rather live and die there than anywhere else in the world."

"Then go you and get ready; and, mind you, have some ale before you start. I must keep my promise to Miss Gwynne; mind you yours to me. You 'ont encourage my son Owen without my consent."

"No, Sir—never. And I do not wish or mean ever to marry any one, if you will only believe me."

"I don't believe any young 'ooman who says that. You may as well go into a nunnery. But I believe the rest till I find you out to the contrary. Now, go you and get ready."

"Thank you, Sir—thank you."

Soon after this conversation the former had mounted his good mare, who was as much refreshed as her master by a night's rest, and

with Gladys, *en croupe*, and Lion running by his side, he jogged back to his home.

"We shall have a fine long journey, and a tiresome one enough," he muttered. "Thirty mile and carrying double is too much for my mare. — take the 'oomen! they'll be the death o' me, one way and another. There's mother, and Netta, and Miss Gwynne, and now this Gladys! This is the last time I'll put myself out for any of 'em, or my name isn't David Prothero."

CHAPTER X.

THE MISSIONARY.

It was about half past ten o'clock when Mr. Prothero and Gladys started on their homeward journey. When they had gone about half way, they stopped for an hour to bait the mare, which brought them to nearly two o'clock, and reduced Mr. Prothero to a state of great ill humour. Poor Gladys had to bear many reproachful speeches, which reached her between a very animated conversation which he kept up with the mare and Lion alternately. He did not talk much to her, but contented himself with making her eat and drink a great deal more than was pleasant for her, because, as he phrased it, "People shouldn't think she was starved at Glanaravon."

In truth, there was a great contrast between the farmer's rosy, broad, good-humoured countenance, which not even his present angry feelings could make morose, and Gladys' pale, wearied face, rendered more palid than usual by her late fatigue and anxiety. It was with some difficulty that she could keep her seat behind Mr. Prothero, as the mare trotted on at an equal, but somewhat rough pace, and made her long for rest.

However, all things come to an end, and within about five miles of Glanaravon, Mr. Prothero muttered—"Confound the 'oomen! Shall we ever get home; 'tis enough to kill the mare. Come along, old girl! Good dog! Lion, old boy!"—which sentences were interrupted by the address of a stranger on horseback, who asked if he were right for Glanaravon Park.

"Quite right, Sir," said Mr. Prothero, pleased at any break in a ride that had been peculiarly devoid of adventure. "I am going half a mile beyond the Park myself, and shall be proud to show you the way if you aren't in a hurry."

"By no means. I am too tired to ride very fast myself, for I have been a great traveller of late. I came down from London to Glamorganshire two days ago, and have come across country in coaches and dog-carts to the 'Coach and Horses.' I dare say you know the inn?"

"Oh yes, Sir. That's the 'Coach and Horses' mare you're upon now?"

"Yes; I borrowed her to come to Glanaravon, and have promised to ride her back to-night; but I am sure I shall not be able. How far are we from Glanaravon?"

"About four mile and a half."

"You live in the village?"

"There is no village, Sir. I live at Glanaravon Farm."

"Is there any inn nearer than the 'Coach and Horses' where I might get a night's lodging, and a man to ride the mare back?"

"No, Sir; but I shall be glad to offer a bed to any friend of Mr. Gwynne's, though I am sure you'll find one at the Park."

"Thank you kindly. I am not known to

Mr. Gwynne ; but I am going to see Miss Hall, who, I believe, resides with him."

"To be seure she does; and a better lady never lived. If you're a friend of Miss Hall's, you're as welcome to our house as if you were born and bred at Glanaravon."

"You are very kind. It does one good to meet with true Welsh hospitality once more."

"You're not Welsh, Sir, I should say."

"I was Welsh originally ; but it would be difficult to make out my parish, as I have been wandering about for many years."

"A clergyman, Sir ?"

"Yes, Sir."

The gentleman smiled, and thought the question savoured of American curiosity.

"I have a son a clergyman. Perhaps you may have fallen in with him. They tell me he's a very promising young man."

"What is his name ?"

"Prothero, Sir—Rowland Prothero."

"I do not know him personally, but I know him by reputation ; he is curate of an old friend of mine, Mr. Stephenson."

"To be seure—Rowly's rector ! Allow me

to shake hands with you, Sir. You'll sleep at Glanaravon."

"Certainly, if I shall not inconvenience you and your family. Your daughter looks very ill and tired; perhaps it may—"

"Not a bit, Sir; she's not my daughter, she always looks as pale as moonlight, 'scept when she blushes up; she'll see to a bed for a strange gentleman, and so 'll my missus. To think of your knowing Mr. Stephenson."

"Yes, I saw him during my short stay in town; and he told me he had a capital curate, a countryman of mine. A regular hard-working, useful parish priest, he called him, a good preacher besides!"

"Well, mother will be pleased, won't she Gladys?"

This was said, in the old, good-humoured way, and Gladys brightened up, as she answered, "Yes, Sir, very."

"Are you ill?" said the stranger, looking at Gladys with sudden interest.

"No, Sir, thank you, I am only rather tired," was the reply.

"Tired! I should think so! why she's

walked more than thirty miles, and ridden thirty in the last two days," said the Farmer gruffly.

The stranger glanced again, compasssionately at Gladys, but merely said,

"She looks so pale, that I fancied she was suddenly faint. How long has Miss Hall been at Glanaravon?"

"Somewhere about two or three years now, I should say; but when she was teaching Miss Gwynne, she was there a good many years."

"Is she in good health? how does she look? Is she happy?"

"If she was ill, Sir, I don't think any one 'ould know it, she's so quiet and patient; but I think she's pretty well, and she can't help being happy, for she's just the same as if she was at home with her father and sister. Now she is a nice lady! If all 'oomen were like her there 'ouldn't be half the plague with 'em there is. She's quite content without having a lot of lovers after her, and running away, and making every body in a fever. Deet to goodness, my opinion is that the world 'ould go on a sight better without 'em. What do you think, Sir?

You must have plenty of experience as a clergyman, for all the ladies are pretty sharp after the cloth ?"

The stranger laughed, and said he thought the world would be very disagreeable without the fair sex, and that he had no doubt Mr. Prothero would find it so, if they became suddenly extinct.

The Farmer was so pleased with his new acquaintance, that when they reached the Park gate he said very heartily,

"Now mind you, Sir, there's a warm welcome, and a well-aired bed, and fine, white, home-spun linen at the Farm. The squire may give you a better dinner, may be, but not a hotter, I'll answer for it, Gladys 'll see to that ; she's capital for that. And mother 'ould be so glad to hear what the Rector said about our Rowly,"

"You may depend upon my coming," said the stranger, "what time does Mr. Gwynne dine? I suppose I shall escape his dinner hour. It is now about five o'clock."

"Oh ! they don't dine till Christian folks are going to bed, seven or eight o'clock, or some

such heathen hour. You'll be able to see them all before dinner, but I don't believe Mr. Gwynne 'll let you come away."

"I shall not see him probably; good day for the present."

The stranger rode slowly up the drive, from the lodge to the house, and Mr. Prothero quickened his pace homeward. The mare, nothing loath, trotted off, hard and fast, and Gladys looked paler than ever.

When they reached the farm gate, they were greeted by a loud shout from the 'boys,' Tom and Bill, who were right glad to see pretty Gladys back again. They both ran as fast as they could to the house, to tell their mistress the good news, and Lion after them. Mrs. Prothero was at the door to receive the travellers, and as Gladys slipped off the mare, took her round the neck, and gave her a most hearty kiss.

"My dear David, I am so thankful! so much obliged!" she said, as her more portly husband dismounted. "Come in quick, Miss Gwynne and Miss Hall are here. They were just going,

but they will be relieved of all their anxiety when they see Gladys. Come in, Gladys fach! don't be afraid; they must see you."

Poor Gladys was crying with all her heart. Good, comfortable, refreshing tears of joy at her mistress's kind welcome.

Miss Gwynne appeared at the parlour door.

"Well, Gladys! you have had your long walk for nothing. What a foolish girl you were to go away. Mr. Prothero, how do you do? I am so glad you have brought us back Gladys. We couldn't do without her in these parts."

"Do you still stand to your text, Miss Gwynne?" said Mr. Prothero, "we may as well settle the matter at once. It will be a great thing for the girl."

"Oh, certainly; only she looks too tired to settle anything. Gladys, I will give you a day or two to consider whether you will come and live with me, as my maid; or be Miss Hall's pattern school-mistress?"

Gladys looked from Miss Gwynne to Miss Hall, and then from her master to her mistress,

through the tears that were gathering faster and faster. She answered in a voice half-choked by them.

"Thank you, Ma'am, thank you over and over and over again. If I must go away—if I must—whichever—you—like—I—" here she finally broke down, and sitting down on a chair, sobbed aloud. Mrs. Prothero went to her, and put her arm round her neck. Miss Gwynne looked on compassionately, and Miss Hall turned to Mr. Prothero.

"She does not like to leave you, Mr. Prothero," she said gently.

"I don't want to turn the girl out of the house. But if Miss Gwynne wants her, I think it is better for all parties for her to go."

"If you please—certainly," said Gladys, recovering herself with an effort "I would much rather go to Miss Gwynne, in any capacity, and if I can be of use—It is best my dear mistress."

"Then go you Gladys, and stop crying," said Mr. Prothero, "why your eyes 'll be as red as ferrets, when the gentleman comes, and he 'll think we've been giving you an appetite by

making you cry. I was near forgetting, Miss Hall, that we left a strange gentleman at the Park gate, who said he was going to call on you: he's going to take a bed here, because there's no inn nearer than the 'Coach and Horses.'"

"Who can that be?" said Miss Hall.

"We had better make haste home, or we shall miss him," said Freda.

"Good bye Mrs. Prothero, I will come again, and settle about Gladys."

It was nearly dusk when the ladies left the Farm, and they walked very fast. They had not gone far, when they saw some one on horseback coming towards them.

"I daresay this is your friend, and that stupid Morgan hasn't let him in," said Freda.

"It cannot be, I do not know this gentleman at all," said Miss Hall, as the stranger advanced.

He looked at them, and they at him; but as there was no symptom of recognition on either side, they passed without speaking.

"I hope we shall have a good night's rest, now that Gladys is found," said Miss Gwynne.

"What is there in the girl that interests one so much? Even Mr. Prothero, in spite of his son, was glad to find her, and to have her at the Farm again. Colonel Vaughan admires her very much."

"I hope not too much," said Miss Hall quietly.

"What an absurd idea," said Miss Gwynne, colouring from beneath her broad hat. "He is a man that admires beauty and talent, wherever it is to be found. I do like that sort of person; free from vulgar prejudice."

"Not quite, I think, my dearest Freda. He is not so easily read, perhaps, as you in your straightforward nature fancy."

"If he isn't prejudiced you are, at any rate," said Freda.

When they reached the house, Freda went into the drawing-room first, and Miss Hall heard her exclaiming, as she rushed out of it with a card in her hand—

"Serena! Nita! only think. Mr. Jones, Melbourne, South Australia! Hurrah! I never thought I should be so glad to see a card bearing that name. Morgan! why didn't you

ask the gentleman who called on Miss Hall to come in and wait?"

"I did not know, Ma'am," said the man who was at the door. "My master does not always like strangers, and I did not know the gentleman."

Miss Hall had vanished up-stairs during this little interlude with Morgan, so Freda did not see the agitation of her manner when she took the card and read the name. Freda went straight into the library, where she found her father half asleep over a letter.

"Papa! papa! Do you know an old friend of Miss Hall's has called that she has not seen for twenty years, and Morgan let him go away."

"Wasn't she glad, my dear? It is so exciting to see people whose very faces you have forgotten."

"Glad, papa? of course not. He must just have come from Australia where her sister is living, and I dare say has brought letters. By the way, there was a packet near the card."

"I don't understand people going so far away from their own country."

"But, papa, Mr. Jones—this gentleman, has

gone to sleep at Mr. Prothero's, and I dare say they are not prepared for him."

"Really—well, my dear?"

"Don't you think you had better write and ask him here to dinner, and I will order a bed to be prepared?"

"Me! My dear!—a perfect stranger!—a bore! Some one full of tiresome adventures and traveller's stories, and all that sort of thing."

"He is a clergyman, papa, and a Welshman, I believe. It would only be hospitable. We must not belie our country. Do write, papa. Think how anxious Miss Hall must be to hear of her sister."

"But you say she has a packet of letters."

"There is nothing like seeing a friend who has seen one's sister, I should think. Just one line of invitation! We will amuse him. He is very quiet, Miss Hall says. Here is the paper, and a new pen. There's a good pappy, and—yes, 'Presents his compliments'—yes—don't forget the bed. That's right! Now, just add, 'that if he prefers not coming to-night, you hope he will make a point of spending the day here to-morrow.'"

"But I don't hope it, my dear."

"We will amuse him. Drive him out—any thing. And perhaps he won't come."

"Very well. Remember that I am not expected to—to—"

"Nothing, but just to drive with him. Thanks! you are a capital *pater*, and I will send this off immediately. Just direct it. '— Jones, Esq., Glanaravon Farm.' I wonder whether his name is David? I hope not. I don't like David."

Freda carried the note to the butler herself, and told him to get it sent immediately, and to tell the messenger to wait for an answer; then she went with the parcel of letters to Miss Hall.

The note found Mr. Jones, Mr. Prothero, and Gladys, comfortably established near a snug fire in the hall, at a well-spread tea-table. Mr. Jones asked for tea in preference to *cwrw da*, and he and Gladys were enjoying it, whilst Mr. Prothero chose the good home-brewed. Eggs and bacon, cold meat, and most tempting butter, were upon the table, and Mrs. Prothero was acting waitress and hostess at the same time.

Shanno appeared with the note, delicately

held by the corner between her finger and thumb.

"From the Park, Missus, for the gentleman."

"Promise you me, before you open it, not to go there to-night," said Mr. Prothero, taking the note.

"That I can safely do," said Mr. Jones.

When he had read the note he looked pleased, and his manner was rather flurried, as he said—

"Perhaps I can manage to stay over to-morrow, but I will not go to-night. Will you oblige me with a pen and ink?"

Gladys was off in a moment, and returned with writing materials.

Mr. Jones wrote a polite note, declining the invitation for that evening upon plea of the lateness of the hour and fatigue, but promising to call on the morrow early, and to remain the day, if he possibly could.

After he had despatched his note, he seemed more thoughtful than he was before, and, for a short time, absent when spoken to; but rousing himself, he made good return for the kindness and hospitality of his host and hostess, by his agreeable and instructive conversation.

He told them that he had been a missionary ever since his ordination, and had travelled over the principal parts of the continent of Australia. Gladys forgot her fatigue in her great interest in his subject; and when he saw her deep attention, he frequently addressed her and drew forth questions from her, which surprised Mr. Prothero quite as much, or more than it did Mr. Jones. Mrs. Prothero knew the girl's turn of mind too well to be astonished at the amount of missionary and geographical knowledge that she possessed. Gladys was naturally very timid and modest, but when subjects of interest were introduced, she forgot her timidity in a desire for information.

Owen had discovered her bent, and in their frequent meetings, accidental or designed, had often chained her to him by descriptions of the countries he had visited and the wonders he had seen. He, too, had found out that there was a deep vein of romance running beneath the stratum of reserve that, at first, had formed the outer feature of her character, but which was wearing away, as she became accustomed to her

new friends, and had been treated as a friend by them.

It was evident that Mr. Jones was greatly interested in Gladys. He addressed her; looked at her; called her "my dear," somewhat to the scandal of Mr. Prothero, who thought him too young a man for such a familiar address. But Gladys only turned on him two beautiful eyes beaming with a kind of wondering gratitude, and thought the white and grey hairs that were mingled with the brown, and the deep lines in his forehead, quite passport enough for the two kind words.

In addition to a great deal of missionary adventure, Mr. Jones told his new friends that he had come home partly in search of health and rest, and partly to stir up friends at home in the cause of religion abroad. He said that he might or might not return himself to Australia; it would depend on circumstances; but that he could not be idle in England, and was likely to become either a fellow-curate of Rowland's, or a neighbouring one. He liked a city curacy, because, having taught the heathen in another land for many years, he thought he might do

some good amongst them at home; he told them, also, that it was during a year's residence in Melbourne that he had known Miss Hall's sister. He had been obliged to undertake clerical duty there, because his health was failing in his attempts to convert the aborigines.

Mr. Jones was a man of grave and quiet manner; one who seemed to think much and deeply. He habitually led the conversation without pedantry to religious or instructive subjects, and when lighter matter was introduced, was rather given to withdraw his mind from it to his own thoughts.

He had been little in society for many years, during which his time had been passed in the highest, weightiest, gravest, grandest of all labours—that of studying to turn the human soul from darkness to light. Now that he found himself in his own country again, he felt far behind most men in worldly conversation, though very far beyond them, not only in religious, but in practical, useful, and general knowledge; such knowledge, I mean, as would be suited to the improvement, not merely of savages, but of the wild, lawless bushmen,

gold diggers, and convicts of the Australian world. His manners were gentleman-like, but slightly old fashioned, and doubtless, many a young Englander would have found matter for ridicule in some of his doings and sayings. Not so, however, the good and cultivated Englishman of the nineteenth century. He would have found abundance to love and respect in the man who left the luxury, science, learning and refinement of England, in that most wonderful of all ages, to labour amongst the refuse of her people, in the largest of her colonies. For Mr. Jones had seen but little, during his twenty years of Australian life, of the better portion of Australian settlers, or the grandeur of her cities. He had devoted himself to those who had no means of gaining religious teaching elsewhere, and he thanked God that the years of his ministry had not been without abundance of those fruits in which the heart of the laborious worker in Christ's vineyard rejoices.

When Mr. Jones left the Farm the following morning, it was with a promise to pay it another visit at no very distant period. He took away with him a letter to Rowland, which was to

introduce the brother clergymen to each other As he shook Mr. Prothero by the hand, he thanked him warmly for his hospitality, and then abruptly added, "Take care of that young girl Gladys. She will surely prove a blessing to you, and repay you for any kindness you may bestow upon her."

CHAPTER XI.

THE LADY'S MAID.

Miss Hall and Freda were sitting alone in the morning room that has before been alluded to. The former was much more nervous than Freda had ever seen her. First she took up her work, then her book, then she began to copy some music. Freda had great pleasure in watching her, and in remarking that the calm Serena could be excited by the expected appearance of a lover of twenty years ago. Also in observing that she had a most becoming colour on her cheeks, and looked quite young; also that she was dressed even with more care than usual, and her hair was smooth as brush could make it. Freda longed to laugh at her,

but she forbore; she felt that there was something very touching in this meeting between two people who had parted under such uncomfortable circumstances so many years ago.

When the door bell rang, Freda rose to leave the room.

"If you please, Freda, remain where you are, I would very much rather."

Freda resumed her seat, and shortly after Mr. Jones was announced.

"Quite an old man, twice as old as Nita," was Freda's first thought as she looked at him.

Miss Hall rose and advanced to meet Mr. Jones. They shook hands, Freda thought, very much like other people, and then Miss Hall introduced her, and Mr. Jones bowed.

"I promised your sister to come and see you, Miss Hall, when I came down into Wales," he said after he was duly seated.

"I am very much obliged to you, it was very kind," was the reply.

Freda saw that they were both as nervous and shy as a couple of children, and came to the rescue by apologizing for her father's unavoidable absence, he having gone to a neighbouring

tenant's, and by saying that he would be at home at luncheon.

By degrees they all three got into conversation, and Mr. Jones gave Miss Hall an account of her sister and her family. One little girl was very like Miss Hall, and she was the general favourite."

"I am sure she must be very pretty," suggested Freda.

"Very," said Mr. Jones, with a smile at Freda, of greater archness than she gave him credit for.

"Don't you think Miss Hall very little altered?" she asked again.

"I think I should have known her anywhere, though I passed her in the twilight, uncertain who she was."

A long conversation followed upon various general topics, until the luncheon bell rang. As no Mr. Gwynne appeared, Freda was obliged to make another excuse for him; but Mr. Jones seemed perfectly satisfied without him, if not relieved by his non-appearance.

Freda proposed a walk as soon as luncheon was over, and she and Miss Hall took their guest to see the school, which Freda was careful

to say was under Miss Hall's superintendence. Then they pioneered him to various points of view, which he seemed to look upon with the eye of a real lover of the beauties of nature; and finally, they rested on a rustic seat at the top of a wooded hill, whence they looked down on the magnificent valley beneath, with its green meadows, winding river, and boundary of distant mountains.

After Freda had remained here a few minutes, she suddenly said,

"Would you mind my just running down to Mrs. Prothero's, to settle with her about Gladys. I am sure we shall none of us be happy until that matter is arranged. If you will go down through the wood, Nita, I will join you at the waterfall, or somewhere else, in less than a quarter of an hour. Will you excuse me, Mr. Jones?"

"Certainly," was the reply.

"But had we not better all go?" asked Miss Hall, casting an entreating glance upon Freda, who, however, would not see it.

"I think not. Mrs. Prothero is so nervous that we should frighten her to death. It will

take me five minutes to run down the hill, five minutes to say my say, and five to get to the waterfall. But you need not hurry away, as I can wait for you; or, if you are not there, I will find you. Come, Frisk, come with me."

Frisk was a fine little Scotch terrier, his mistress' especial favourite, and he bounded after her with great satisfaction. The pair were soon half way down the hill, near the bottom of which Glanaravon Farm lay.

"I think I managed that capitally," said Freda to Frisk; "didn't I, Frisk? Now, if he doesn't take advantage of the opportunity, he is very foolish; don't you think so, Frisk?"

Frisk jumped, and barked, and twirled about, in a very affirmative way.

"I should like to make up a match, it would be such fun. And I think he is a very worthy, gentlemanly sort of man, though I shouldn't like him for myself, and he is not quite the sort of person that I could have supposed would have made such an impression on Serena. But she would be such a capital clergyman's wife, and he would be so fond of her! But what should I do without her? Get married myself?

The only man I ever saw that I could marry, won't marry; and then he doesn't care for me. Heigho! this is an odd world. All of us at cross purposes. But I don't mean to break my heart—do I, Frisk?"

The "do I, Frisk?" brought Freda and her dog to the gate that led into the road, and the road soon led them to the Farm, where Frisk began at once to run after all the poultry, to the no small annoyance of Shanno. But Freda succeeded in catching him, and carrying him off with her into the parlour, whither she went, and whither Mrs. Prothero followed her.

"I have just come to ask what you have settled about Gladys," said Miss Gwynne. "I cannot stay long, and am anxious to know."

"My husband thinks it better that she should go to you, as you kindly wish to take her," replied Mrs. Prothero, with tears in her eyes. "He says that he has no ill will to the poor girl; on the contrary, he is very fond of her, but he don't think her a good match for our eldest son, Owen, who might marry very well. For my own part, I think he would never meet with such another as Gladys; but

that is in the hands of Providence, and if it is to be, it will be. He says that he is sure Owen will never come home as long as she is with us, for fear of sending her away; but that when he knows that she is so well off with you, he will, perhaps, come back again. And, indeed, we want him sadly, Miss Gwynne. It is a great trial to us, to have three children, and neither of them at home to help us. My husband is much altered since Netta married, though he don't show it; and Netta won't write, or do anything to prove she's sorry, and though he don't say so, I think this makes him more angry."

"Then you really wish Gladys to come to me?"

"I do indeed, Miss Gwynne. I am quite sure it will be for her good; and you cannot help liking her. But she will not make any choice between the two situations you offer, but says you must do with her whatever you think best."

"Is she very unhappy at the idea of coming to us?"

"Not at all. She is very sad to leave us,

but she says she would rather do so, and would rather serve you than any other lady in the world."

"Well, perhaps it may be best for all parties. I think she is too young and too pretty to live alone at the school-house, and besides, I don't particularly want to change mistresses: so I mean to have her as my maid, and then I can take care of her myself. You know I have not had a regular maid since that disagreeable affair of Evans; one of the housemaids has waited on me, and I don't like maids, they are so in one's way. But I shall like Gladys. And she can help Miss Hall in the school, and go and see you every evening if she likes, when we are at dinner. In short, I am sure it is a capital plan for us all, and will make matters easy for you."

"You are so very kind, Miss Gwynne, I do not know what we should have done without you. Gladys would have begged her way back to Ireland, and died there."

"I mustn't stay any longer; I have outstaid my five minutes over and over again. You can send Gladys when you like. I have heaps

of dresses, and clothes of all kinds for her, so dont you think of giving her anything new. I will give her the same wages that I gave Evans, so she will feel quite independent; and I will put her under the particular charge of the housekeeper, until she gets into the ways of the house. Now I must go; what will Miss Hall say?"

Well might Freda ask, "what will Miss Hall say?" She walked as quickly as possible to the waterfall, she was not there; up the hill again, not there; home through the wood, not there; into the house, not there. She waited a little while with her hat on, but as no Mr. Jones or Miss Hall arrived, she took off her walking things, and went about her usual avocations, saying to herself, with a smile on her lips the while,

"I never thought I was a manœuvrer before. It is evident they don't want me, or they would have waited for me, and I have no doubt they are much happier without me. I must go and look after my father."

Freda found Mr. Gwynne in his library.

"Where is your guest, Freda? What is he like? Is he a bore?" were his queries.

"He is walking with Miss Hall, and my impression is they are very good company. He is very quiet, very grave, has no wonderful traveller's stories, and none of the ologies, and can play chess, for I asked him. I don't think him a bore, and I am sure Miss Hall doesn't."

"Very well, then I will go into the drawing-room against he comes in."

"Thanks; and I will whisper a little secret into your ear; he is an old lover of Serena's, and I cannot help hoping he is come to propose for her."

Mr. Gwynne was alive and interested in a moment. It is curious how on the alert people are when they hear of a love affair.

"I will go and dress at once; he must be nice if Miss Hall likes him, for she is certainly the least intrusive, and all that sort of thing. Is he like Rowland Prothero?"

Freda coloured at this sudden question.

"No, not at all; besides he is a middle aged man."

"To be sure; I suppose so. Miss Hall must be—I don't know—nearly forty I suppose. I wish Rowland Prothero lived at the

Farm; he was so obliging and pleasant; even Lady Mary Nugent admires him."

"She is no great criterion of what is agreeable; I shouldn't think it any compliment to be liked by her. There is the dressing bell. Now, papa, do be ready for dinner if you please."

Freda went to her room in a sudden fit of ill temper. The mention of Lady Mary always put her out of humour. In a few moments there was a tap at the door, and Miss Hall made her appearance.

"I might have waited a long time at the waterfall, Serena," she began maliciously.

For answer, Miss Hall went to her and kissed her, and when Freda looked up, she saw that there was an unusually bright colour in her cheeks, and something very like tears in her eyes.

Freda threw her arms round her friend, exclaiming,

"I know, Nita dear! It is all signed, sealed, and settled *n'est-ce pas?*"

And so it proved; during that long walk the old love had become new, and two people as

deserving of happiness as most of the poor sinful mortals who are for ever seeking her, were made perfectly happy for that day at least.

Freda's reflections, whilst she sat alone, listlessly brushing her hair and dressing herself, were as follows.

"How happy she seems; she looks twenty years younger; and he, an elderly, iron-grey clergyman; it would be ridiculous, only it is all so true and good. I suppose, after all, there is something grand, as the poets say, in constancy, and love, and the like; and I ought to pity Rowland Prothero, if he really cares for me. And yet I don't; on the contrary, I could be over head and ears in love with another man to-morrow if he would only ask me; and he is gone away without telling me that he cares for me, if he does, as I cannot help hoping. But nothing shall induce me to give my heart to any one, unless I am asked for it, of that I am resolved; no, not if I were to die in the struggle to keep it."

With this prudent and womanly resolution, Freda got up from her seat, hastily put on her

dress, and went to Miss Hall, to insist on dressing her on that particular day.

"You must put on the pink and white muslin that you look so well in. I insist on it, and will have my way to-night," she said, and had her way accordingly, and the satisfaction of hearing her father remark afterwards, that "he had not seen Miss Hall look so well for years. She really was a very pretty ladylike person, and Mr. Jones ought to think himself very fortunate, and all that sort of thing."

To judge from Mr. Jones's manner and countenance, he did think himself very happy and fortunate; and his happiness and good fortune had the effect of making him so very agreeable, that Mr. Gwynne was quite pleased with him, and strongly urged his remaining some days at Glanaravon. But this could not be, as he was engaged to be present at a meeting of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel the next day but one. To Freda's indignation, her father engaged him in a game of chess, which lasted the greater part of the evening; but as he seemed quite patient under the infliction, and Miss Hall glad that he should be

agreeable to her kind friend, Mr. Gwynne, Freda was obliged to give up her plan of leaving them alone for the remainder of the evening, and to be content with resolving that they should at least have the following morning to themselves. This she effected, and was rewarded by a lusty squeeze of the hand from the gentleman, when he took his leave, which she afterwards declared to Miss Hall, would have made an Australian native scream. Mr. Gwynne sent Mr. Jones to meet the train in his carriage, and invited him to return as soon as he possibly could.

It may, perhaps, be as well to anticipate some of the events of this story, and to say that in the course of three or four months, Mr. Jones and Miss Hall were married.

Soon after his return to London, Mr. Jones was appointed brother curate to Rowland Prothero, recommended by his friend, the Rector. He undertook this as temporary duty, because he was in expectation either of obtaining a living or of returning to Australia; Miss Hall was quite ready for either kind of work, feeling that, whether as the wife of a clergyman at home or

abroad, she would be most thankful to be permitted to devote herself to her woman's part of missionary labour. Mr. Jones had a small income as secretary to one of the London and Colonial religious societies, and was also engaged in work for the S. P. G., which, together with his curacy, and the small savings of twenty years abroad enabled him to take and furnish a home for his wife, and gave them the prospect of comfort, if not of ease and riches. Their desires were very moderate, and their hopes fixed on objects beyond the general scope of vision; so that they were content to "live by the day," and trust for the rest. The world called them romantic and foolish for people of their ages; they "knew in whom they believed," and "having food and raiment, were therewith content."

Gladys had been installed in her offices of parsel lady's-maid, parsel school-mistress at the Park, nearly three months, when the wedding took place. She had largely contributed towards making Miss Hall's simple wardrobe and wedding gear, and was rewarded by being allowed to marshal the school-children on the

happy-day, as they lined the drive at the Park-gates, on the going forth and return of the bridal party. She was, moreover, the one selected by the children to present Miss Hall with a handsome Bible in Welsh and English, in token of their gratitude and love for her. Mr. Jones had been too much engaged in London to allow of his visiting Wales until two or three days before his marriage, during which times he had occasionally met, and spoken kindly to Gladys, and given her a book on Missionary subjects, which he had brought purposely for her, expecting to find her at the Farm. He had also carried pleasant news of Rowland to Mrs. Prothero, and frequently spoken of him to Mr. Gwynne and Freda—of his earnestness in his profession, and of the love and esteem in which he was held by his rector and his flock.

Freda felt very lonely when her dear Serena was gone. She had no one amongst her immediate neighbours for whom she cared much. The general round of country dinner-parties she had always found very dull, and the annual hunt week, and assize balls she had never liked; so she found herself again thrown quite

upon her own resources. As long as Colonel Vaughan had been in the country, she had taken an interest in everything ; when he left her, ordinary pursuits—her riding, painting, music, garden—in all of which he had aided her, suddenly lost their charm. Her friend's marriage came about just when she wanted an object of interest, and when that was over she was thrown back upon herself.

By degrees, however, a healthier tone returned to her mind, and she forgot the fascinating Colonel Vaughan, and recovered her interest in her house, school, dogs, birds, garden, and the thousand and one small objects that serve to make time pass cheerfully and happily in a country home. Above all, she became more and more interested in Gladys, and anxious to shelter her from the many dangers and temptations which she saw her peculiar beauty and position subjected her to. She soon found out that all the men-servants paid their devotions to her shrine, and that even the ancient and portly butler was not indifferent to her charms ; but the simplicity and modesty of Gladys kept them all at a respectful distance, and the house-

keeper told Miss Gwynne, that "Reelly, she was quite a pattern in the servant's 'All, and it was a treat to see a young 'oman who knew how to keep the men off—not but the girls were as jealous of her as could be; but that wasn't to be wondered at, for none of 'em was made anything of when Gladys was near." Even Mr. Gwynne roused himself to make enquiries concerning Freda's pretty maid, which was quite the crowning feather in Gladys' cap.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.

Plas Abertewey was a fine old country seat, that had been in Colonel Vaughan's family for generations. Miss Gwynne was not the only scion of the good old county gentry who was disgusted at seeing it in the possession of a son of old Griffey Jenkins, the miser. But so it was to be. Howel took the place, nominally for a term, but with the avowed intention of purchasing it, or the first place of any note that should be for sale in the county.

He made liberal proposals to Colonel Vaughan's agents as regarded improvements and repairs, the house having been much neglected for some years; and in the course of a few

months after his marriage with Netta, workmen of all kinds were employed in adorning Plas Abertewey for the expected arrival of him and his bride.

This did not take place, however, until the following spring, by which time the house and grounds were in as fine order as money could make them. Howel sent down a person from London to superintend the work, and remained with Netta in Paris until it was nearly completed; then he brought her over to England, left her in London with his friends the Simpsons, and ran down into Wales, accompanied by Captain Dancy, who had been his companion during a great portion of his Paris trip.

They remained only a few days, and then returned to town to superintend the purchase of furniture, plate, and the various appurtenances of a country establishment, which were duly despatched to the *chargé d'affaires* in the country, and vigilantly guarded by Mrs. Griffith Jenkins, who took up her abode at Abertewey for the time being.

As bell-ringers do not pause to consider the cause and effect of the events they are ordered

to commemorate, but rather think of the amount of money and liquid they are likely to receive for their labour, the chime of Llanfawr rang a merry peal, when the future master and mistress of Plas Abertewey drove through the town. There was, moreover, a small show of fireworks on the occasion. Blue balls, crackers, rockets and the like blazed and hissed about to the no small danger of the thatched roofs of some of the houses. Mrs. Griffith Jenkins undrew her purse strings on that day, and the cheering and shouting were great, as the bride and bridegroom appeared. Howel bowed and smiled as all great men do on such occasions, and Netta laughed, and was proud. One of the blue balls made the fine pair of horses that drew Howel's new carriage take fright, but the London coachman showed the superiority of his driving by pulling them in; and the crowd shouted amain.

Captain Dancy and Miss Simpson, who accompanied the pair, were duly impressed with the loyalty of Howel's subjects, and were not particularly shown the little shop to which he owed their sudden devotion. "Jenkins, the

miser" was quite swallowed up in "Howel Jenkins, Esq.," and "Netta Prothero, Glanaravon" was engulphed in his wife. So goes the world. Shout on, little boys, for so it will be when you are in your turn big men, and "adore the rising, rather than the setting sun," as the French proverb hath it.

Fortunately, Abertewey was in the parish of Llanfawr, and some seven or eight miles from Glanaravon, therefore Mr. and Mrs. Prothero knew nothing of the demonstrations in honour of their children.

Mrs. Griffith Jenkins received them, dressed in a new *moiré antique*, quite in baronial style, under the portico of their dwelling, and the proper complement of retainers were in the background. More shouts were heard from some of the immediate neighbours, who had gathered round the door to see the arrival; and as Netta alighted from her carriage, attired like a Paris doll, she felt that she was now a grand lady, and could conscientiously look down on Miss Rice Rice, and be on an equality with Miss Nugent.

Howel gave some orders in a very command-

ing tone, to the various lords-in-waiting, and then the door closed upon their majesties, and the admiring crowds saw them no more.

It is no wonder that the world without Plas Abertewey was much engaged in talking of and speculating on the world within. Howel's horses, Netta's dress, Miss Simpson's father's baronetcy, Captain Dancy's regiment, Plas Abertewey's appointments, the footmen's liveries, the reputed wealth of the miser, even Mrs. Griffith Jenkins' moiré antique, mourning ornaments and gold watch were variously remarked upon, and doubtless with great good nature and deserving approbation. We all know how we all rejoice when our neighbours rise to wealth or eminence. There was not one breakfast-table within twenty miles of Abertewey, from that of my lord and my lady to Jim Davies and his wife, shoemakers, over which the arrival of Howel Jenkins, the miser, as he was called, according to his father before him, was not pulled to pieces, from the first sound of the bells to the last shout at his hall door.

"Shall we call?" were the words on the lips of all heads of families, generally settled by

the said "heads" driving in their very best equipages and gayest clothes, to pay the wedding visit to the reputed millionnaire and his pretty, elegantly attired wife.

Money, as I have somewhat commonplacedly remarked elsewhere, is the master-key to most hearts, and Howel found that nearly all the hearts in his native county were opened by his wealth. The exceptions were principally those of his wife's family, and even in some of these he managed to turn the key.

It was shortly after the arrival at Plas Abertewey that Owen and Gladys simultaneously left the farm, and we find the former on that same morning, standing at a little distance from this residence of his sister and Howel, surveying it, and ruminating on the family fortunes.

"Well done, Howel;" he said to himself, "if money hasn't done something for you, I don't know for whom it has done anything. I declare I will try and make some myself, and come back and marry Gladys in spite of the world."

Then he began to ask himself, whether it was kind and brotherly to pass by his only sister's door without saying good-bye to her, and

whether his father had any right to expect all her relations to give her up, because he chose to do so. His reflections were suddenly cut short by the appearance of Howel and another gentleman, bound, apparently, on a fishing expedition.

"Owen, come at last!" cried Howel, hastening up to him with great good will. "Better late than never. I am very glad to see you, so will be Netta. Travelled early to hide your carpet bag, or whatever it is?"

"Knapsack," said Owen shaking his cousin's offered hand, "I'm off to sea again."

"A queer road to take; but you come to see us on your way, of course. Let me introduce you to Mr. Simpson, Sir John Simpson's son. My cousin, Mr. Simpson, my wife's brother.

Owen nodded, and Mr. Simpson bowed.

"We're going out fishing, but you'll find Netta—in bed I'm afraid, but she'll be glad to see you any where. Go up the avenue, and let Netta know you've come. We shall be home to dinner at seven. Good-bye for the present."

Owen did not stay to consider, but walked past the handsome lodge, and up the drive, according to Howel's direction.

"Mighty condescending and very patronizing, cousin Howel!" he soliloquized, "but I will go and see how Netta gets on, and how your highness treats her."

He reached the house, and rang stoutly at the bell. A servant answered it, who was adjusting his coat just put on, he not having expected such early visitors.

"The back entrance is round the corner there, young man," were his words on perceiving Owen, whose pride was greatly roused thereby.

"Tell Mrs. Howel Jenkins that her brother, Mr. Owen Prothero, is here," said Owen, intending to electrify the man.

But he did not succeed. The servants knew very well that their mistress's family was not of "county rank," and that its members were not upon terms with the Aberteweys, therefore had no very high opinion of them. He turned on his heel, and told a female servant to tell Lucette, the French maid, to tell

her mistress that Mr. Owen Prothero was at the door.

In a few minutes the man re-appeared, and with a great increase of civility, asked Mr. Prothero to walk into the breakfast-room, and said his mistress would be down as soon as possible. Whilst he was admiring the room and its costly furniture, and considering the tea service, a smart little Frenchwoman came to him and asked him in French, whether he would stay to breakfast; as he knew something of the language, he replied in the affirmative. Then appeared an equally smart and fascinating French valet, who begged to be allowed the honour of conducting Monsieur to a bed-room to arrange his toilet.

Owen laughed heartily and followed the man, who took up his knapsack daintily, and led him to a very handsome bed-room, where Owen brushed his hair as becomingly as he could, arranged his beard, and made himself as smart as his wardrobe would allow of his doing. He was, as we have before said, a very handsome young man, and sufficiently well mannered to pass muster any where.

"What is the next act, I wonder?" said he, as he found his way again to the breakfast-room. He was quite taken aback as he entered, when he saw a pale young lady sitting in one of the windows, reading. He made his bow, she curtseyed, and said,

"Mrs. Howel Jenkins' brother, I believe. My name is Simpson."

Owen bowed again, and not being of a shy turn, and having seen ladies of various degrees during his travels, began to make himself agreeable.

In a few minutes, a little French fairy flitted into the room, with her hair off her face to display such eyes and complexion as are rare in all times; and muslins, laces and ribbons so blended, as to set off a petite figure to the very best advantage. Owen was going to bow again, when a little affected laugh, and a "Ma foi! he doesn't know me, Miss Simpson," proclaimed the fairy to be his sister Netta.

"Owen, you naughty boy, not to know me," the little thing continued, more naturally, running up to her brother, who took her, despite

muslins, laces and ribbons, almost up in his big arms, and kissed her.

"How you have rumpled me, Owen; did you ever see such a thing, Miss Simpson?" she cried, half laughing, half in tears, as she smoothed down the point lace sleeves and collar.

Just then a tall man entered, and Netta disengaging herself from Owen, who was on the point of kissing her again, and asking her what she had done to herself, simpered out an introduction between "Captain Dancy and my brother, Captain Prothero."

"Not quite that yet," began Owen, anxious to disclaim the captaincy, when he was interrupted by the entrance of one or two other men, who were, in their turn, named to him as Sir Samuel Spendall and Mr. Deep. Owen did not like their appearance, and looked towards his really lovely little sister, to see how she received them. Her manners had a mixture of affectation and simplicity that was rather taking than otherwise. And Owen wondered how Howel could leave one so young and pretty amongst three men of the world,

which he soon discovered his new acquaintances to be. True, Miss Simpson was with her, and in the middle of breakfast, to which, in due time, they sat down, another lady came upon the scene, by name, Madame Duvet, who turned out to be the English widow of a Frenchman. She was young, handsome, but over-bold for the taste of a man who was in love with Gladys.

She was at once taken with Owen's handsome face, and talked to him incessantly, whilst Captain Dancy seated himself near Netta, and devoted himself to her much more closely than Owen liked. However, he was very hungry, and managed to make a good breakfast.

He heard Netta telling Captain Dancy that her brother had been at sea all his life, and knew nothing of the fashionable world; at which he thought the ham he was eating would have choked him, in his effort to repress a laugh. He longed very much to knock down one of the "Jeames's," who would stand gazing at him, and did so far betray his indignation, as to ask him, when he came behind his chair, whether he saw anything remarkable in his appearance, which so amused Madame Duvet,

that she exclaimed "*Charmant! brava!* you make me *crêver de rire*."

Owen was astonished at everything, but at nothing so much as at his sister. Netta had always aped the fine lady, and made the most of her few accomplishments; but now, it was all like a fairy-tale, and the heroine was Netta, transformed by some fairy into a princess. By turns coquettish, affected, simple, languishing, accordingly as she feared she was too like her natural self—the Netta of the Farm was no more, and her representative was, to Owen at least, an anomaly. How she could have acquired such an amount of small talk, and such a mincing speech in nine months, was an enigma to him. London, Paris, the opera, the fashions, even the picture galleries, were alternately in her mouth; and she poured out tea and coffee, and laughed a silly laugh, much to her own satisfaction, and Owen's disgust, whilst all the men were looking at her; for assuredly she was very pretty.

"Owen," she said, during a sudden pause in rather a noisy conversation. "I hear Rowland is quite a fashionable preacher. Howel

means to ask him down here, I believe. Miss Simpson went to hear him, didn't you, Miss Simpson?"

This was drawled out, and Owen felt very much disposed to get up and shake his sister, as he had often done when she came from school with any new airs and graces. But he contented himself with saying,

"Rowly's a capital fellow, Netta fach, and doing his best. Whether he's a fashionable preacher or not I don't know, but he kept us all awake at Llanfach one Sunday for half an hour, which is something."

"Your brother is so amusing! so *naïf!* I die of him!" said Madame Duvet.

"Very original!" remarked Miss Simpson, "I do like originality—"

"Then you must like Netta," said Owen, "for there was never any one of our family the least like her."

"Oh yes! you are, about the eyes. *Malin!*" said Madame Duvet.

After breakfast, Owen tried to get Netta a little to himself, but there were distant calls to make, and drives and rides to be ar-

ranged, which caused him to be unsuccessful in his efforts. So he fell to the lot of Mr. Deep, who took him to see Howel's hunters and dogs, and all the other wonders of Abertewey.

"Deep by name, and deep by nature," was Owen's reflection, after his morning with his new acquaintance. "He has managed to get all my secrets out of me, one excepted; but he has not confided any to me in return. One thing I suspect, however, that he has a turn for horse-racing and betting."

Howel and Mr. Simpson came home about six o'clock; and the whole party, with the addition of Mr. Rice Rice, assembled at dinner. Howel had ordered his valet to see that "Captain Prothero" was properly dressed; and, accordingly, Owen was obliged to put on a smart waistcoat and tie belonging to Howel, which greatly embellished his outer man, and gave him increased favour in the eyes of Madame Duvet and Miss Simpson.

He was more astounded than ever when he saw his sister in her evening costume.

"What do you think of her, Owen?" whis-

pered Howel, as he stood literally gazing at her before dinner.

"I can't exactly say," was the reply, "but she is no longer Netta Prothero of the Farm."

"I should imagine not!" said Howel. "Pray don't let us talk of farms here, Owen. I don't like conversation that smells of the shop."

"Not even of the old place where we used to steal lollilops?" asked Owen, maliciously.

Howel turned away for fear of being overheard, and devoted himself quite as much to Madame Duvet, as Captain Dancy still did to Netta; and Owen wondered on.

Again he looked at Netta, as she sat curled up on a sofa, a mere child in appearance, but so pretty, in white, with some sort of cherry-coloured ornaments for dress and head, that no one could possibly have recognized her as the country belle of twelve months ago. "Her own mother would not know her!" thought Howel. "Poor mother, she would scarcely care for all this grandeur, though one can't help envying it a little. I will be off to California, and come home and buy a place,

and see whether Gladys would not be as good a fine lady as Netta."

The dinner was grand; the servants were grand; all was grand to Owen's bewildered imagination. Madame Duvet made such very decided attempts to talk to him, however, that he was obliged to cease wondering, and to bring his usually versatile genius into play, in the light of all the grandeur. He got on so well with the lady, that Howel wondered in his turn, and after dinner told Owen that he verily believed if he played his cards well, he might make an impression on the pretty widow."

"One can do that, I should say, without any cards at all," said Owen, showing his white teeth from amidst his big black beard.

When the ladies had left the dinner-table, Owen began to gain some insight into the characters and pursuits of Howel's guests. He had not spent thirteen or fourteen years amongst men of all ranks and all nations, without having acquired a shrewd judgment, and a tolerable knowledge of mankind.

The conversation turned at once upon hunting, racing, steeple-chasing, billiards, bets, and

the like. It was evident that Howel, too, was well initiated into such matters. Mr. Rice Rice asked him when the question of the hounds was to be decided, and Howel said that kennels were in preparation, and that he hoped to have a first-rate pack by the winter. There arose a dispute about a celebrated racer, that Howel appeared to possess in London, and that was expected daily at Abertewey. Howel declared his intention of letting her run at the Carmarthen races. Captain Dancy, having heavy stakes on the mare, vowed it might disable her for the Derby, and words ran high; but Mr. Deep interposed, and changed the subject to that of *rouge et noïr*.

They sat over the dinner table till nearly eleven o'clock, by which time they were all more or less exhilirated. Howel's wines were good, his cellar was well-stocked, and he was lavish of everything that might give him a reputation amongst the Welsh squires that surrounded him, many of whom still worshipped at the shrine of Bacchus.

When they joined the ladies, Owen thought the conversation was rather too loud and bois-

terous. Captain Dancy, alone, was quite himself, and made Netta sing some little French songs to Owen's great amusement. After tea and coffee had been carried round, a card-table appeared, and *vingt-et-un* was proposed. The stakes were so high that Owen trembled for his small stock of wealth; but to his astonishment again, he found himself, at the end of the evening, a gainer of nearly five pounds although he had been most moderate in his own stakes. He was struck with the eagerness of Madame Duvét and Netta, who entered into the game with all the avidity of accomplished gamblers.

It was very late when they finished the game, and nominally retired for the night; but not late enough to prevent Howel, Captain Dancy, Mr. Deep, and Sir Samuel Spendall from sitting down again to whist. Owen left them at it, and went to bed, not altogether satisfied with himself or his companions.

The following day, Owen again tried to get some private conversation with Howel or Netta, but in vain. The breakfast was even later than the previous morning, as Howel did not

go out fishing, and afterwards there were more distant calls to make, and Netta was engaged in preparing her dress with her maid for a dinner-party at Mr. Rice Rice's, at which she desired to appear particularly grand. The gentlemen were playing billiards part of the day, and riding the rest, in neither of which amusement Owen joined. Madame Duvet did her best to amuse him, and succeeded very well, for Owen was far from insensible to the charms of beauty, and, in spite of Gladys, could not resist flirting a little, in his own matter-of-fact way, with a pretty woman.

The three ladies, Captain Dancy and Howel, were the dinner guests at Mr. Rice Rice's, the other gentlemen were invited for the dance in the evening. Young Rice Rice had given Owen a lame invitation the previous day, which he had declined; never having been in the habit of visiting him when at home, he did not choose to do so under Howel's countenance.

Owen's astonishment was brought to a climax that evening, when his sister appeared, dressed for this, her first public appearance on

the small stage of a country-neighbourhood, or, to speak more respectfully county visiting. It was Howel's pleasure that she should make it in point lace and diamonds. Not even to Owen was it whispered that the lace was a wonderfully good imitation, or that the diamonds, instead of being of the first water, were first rate paste; and no one suspected the deception. The great millionnaire, Howel Jenkins, could well afford to give his pretty wife the real jewels and lace, and had the credit of so doing; and as no one, save himself and the jeweller, knew that they were false, he thought himself a very clever fellow for gaining the reputation of unbounded liberality, upon very small means. Be it said, however, that his own studs, pin and ring, were real.

The French maid had eclipsed herself in Netta's toilet, and Owen felt that if she were not his sister, he must have fallen in love with her himself. The black, roguish eyes sparkled like the brilliants she wore, and the complexion was scarcely rivalled by the roses she had in her bouquet.

Howel looked really proud of her, and it is

not surprising that he felt greatly elevated as he took the reins from the coachman, and drove off in his fine new carriage, drawn by capital horses, and attended by liveried servants.

His last whisper to Netta, before they entered Mr. Rice Rice's drawing-room, was, "Keep up your consequence, and don't say, yes indeed! every minute."

He was determined to keep up his own consequence, and began at once by patronising everybody present. There were some of the county gentry who had demurred as to calling on the old miser's son, and who were astonished at the kind of tone he assumed. They, who had been gravely considering whether they could possibly shake hands with him, found themselves on a level with, if not beneath him, at once, by mere effrontery. There is some truth in the saying, that "Accordingly as you think of yourself, others will think of you;" and impudence and riches combined, together with a certain amount of talent and personal appearance, can overcome vast worldly obstacles. Besides, did he not bring an unmarried baronet

with him—one of the very ancient family of Spendalls—and the son and daughter of a man of title, and a captain of the dragoon guards? to say nothing of that fashionable widow, reputed a fortune. And were there not plenty of young ladies, poor if proud, in the county, wanting partners, either for dancing or life, or both?

After that evening, people sneered at home perhaps, but they called and invited and made much of the master and mistress of Plas Abertewey, forgetting or ignoring their origin.

Netta, too, obeyed Howel's last injunction to the best of her ability. Her youth and beauty were greatly in her favour, and her affectation covered the shyness and awkwardness that she felt in being suddenly thrown amongst people upon whom she had formerly looked with awe. The Nugents were there, but the Gwynnes were absent; and she had the pleasure of feeling that she had as many, if not more, partners than the heiress, Miss Nugent, and was much more grandly dressed. As for Miss Rice Rice, she fell quite into the shade before her.

Her old friend, Sir Hugh Pryse, was particularly attentive, and talked to her of Miss Gwynne; and Captain Dancy was as much devoted to her abroad as at home. Her head was quite turned, and nothing but the consciousness that Howel was present kept it on her shoulders at all; but the fear of a lecture for some mistake in manners kept her so much on her guard, that she got through the evening wonderfully, and achieved what Mme. Duvet called, *un grand succès*.

And Howel danced, and talked, and introduced his friends, and patronised everybody, much as if he had been a feudal monarch amongst his barons. Here and there might have been seen a suppressed smile, as one of the company whispered to another, "Where is Mrs. Griffey Jenkins, I wonder? What would old Griff, the miser, say to those diamonds? I wonder his very ghost doesn't appear;" but still money won its usual way. And when Howel's chariot came to the door, there were more wondering and admiring eyes fixed upon it from the bystanders without, than on that of any other of the assembled party. As Mrs. Griffey Jenkins

said, when she heard of the evening gaieties—"Deet to goodness, and my Howels was grander than any one. I do answer for that. Now his is a beauty carriage and horses, and servants as grand as Queen Victoria's, or Prince Albert's, for I did be seeing them in London myself."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PATRON.

Tuesday and Wednesday had passed quickly away, and Thursday brought to Owen amusements similar to those of the previous days; but no private intercourse with his relations. In the evening of his third day at Abertewey, there was a concert at the neighbouring town, huge bills of which had been posted up on the walls and houses of the said town, purporting that the entertainment was under the immediate patronage of Howel Jenkins, Esq., of Plas Abertewey, and his friends. Elegant little pink and blue programmes were scattered over that patriotic gentleman's tables, and he had used his eloquent language, and made great efforts to get together a large party for the occasion.

It was principally a Welsh concert, he urged, and he considered it right to patronise native talent. There was the celebrated *Eos*, and the last representative of the ancient bards, and the best specimen of a Welsh harper, besides several respectable English singers, and he, for one, should muster as many supporters as he possibly could.

He did so, accordingly, and with that spirit of liberality which characterised him when any popularity was to be acquired thereby, purchased a great number of tickets, and distributed them amongst his servants and neighbours with majestic grace. He had managed to enlist a large party at Mr. Rice Rice's the previous evening, some of whom were to dine at Abertewey, and to go thence to the concert; others to meet him and his friends there.

Owen felt lost in the grandeur of that evening, and would have been quite forgotten but for Mme. Duvet, who was constant in her admiration of him. But it was amusement and wonder enough for him to watch Howel and Netta, quite *en prince et princesse*, receiving their guests, who, if not as yet of the aristo-

cracy of the county, were of high respectability and good position in it. If the host and hostess were rather desirous of showing how grand they were, their dinner and wines were so good as to cover their efforts.

What if their guests remarked, as guests will, gentle reader, when our backs are turned, that Howel was insufferably purse-proud and conceited, and his wife as affected and provincial as possible; they did not hear the friendly notices, and were well content to fill the concert room with their party, all in full dress, to the admiration of the townsfolk, and of Mrs. Griffey Jenkins in particular.

Howel had quite forgotten his mother in his general invitation, and did not even see her for some time, seated in a prominent position, and making one of his own party, to all appearance. She had saved his character for filial duty, by going where he would little have thought of placing her, and awaiting his arrival, as her pride impelled her to do. Owen spied her at once, and took Mme. Duvet to the seat next her, on her left; whilst on her right sat Mr. Deep, and nigh to him, of all people in the

world, Mrs. Rice Rice, that staunch supporter of family dignity.

Owen shook hands with Aunt 'Lisbeth, and at once introduced her to Madame Duvet and Mr. Deep, after having asked them first of all whether they had seen her previously.

"I never had that honour," said Madame Duvet, curtseying.

"I didn't be going to Abertewey since you was coming there, Ma'am," said Mrs. Griffey, rising and curtseying, to the unspeakable diversion of Mrs. Rice Rice and Mr. Deep.

The reader may remember that Mrs. Jenkins was at Abertewey when Howel made his triumphant entry there; but the following morning he gave her to understand, as delicately as he could, that the idiomatic translations of the Welsh language which had been so refreshing in London, would be better in her native town than at Abertewey, and she departed accordingly.

His ire may be imagined, when he suddenly heard the well-known idioms lavished upon Madame Duvet and Mr. Deep, who were enjoying them a great deal more than the concert,

which, being principally in the vernacular, was not so intelligible and far less amusing. Mrs. Jenkins was in her glory. Never had Mrs. Rice Rice been so condescending before. She and Mr. Deep made themselves more agreeable than she had supposed it possible for such grand people to be; and she frequently glanced at Owen, as much as to say, "And I am the person that your father turned out of doors!"

Owen, on his side, was sorry that he had exposed her to the sarcasm that she so little understood, and talked to Madame Duvet to withdraw her attention from her.

As to Howel, his rising sun was obscured—his blushing honours were dimmed—his majesty, patronage, grandeur were lowered by the propinquity of his nearest of kin. In the midst of his county friends himself, he still felt that his mother was making herself ridiculous near at hand; whilst complimented and thanked for his patriotic support of native eos,* the native idioms rang in his ears, and he longed to annihilate them altogether. This on his right hand. On his left, Netta, looking literally like "a rose in

* Nightingales.

June," and receiving the very marked attentions of Captain Dancy, on one side, and of Mr. Rice Rice junior, on the other. He scarcely knew which was most irritating, "the idioms," or her affected giggle. Trite but true is the proverb, "There is no rose without its thorn;" and Howel was pricked severely by the thorns surrounding the rose of his first step into popularity.

Between the acts, and between the songs, Mrs. Griffey went on something in this sort—

"Indeet yes, Sir! treue for you there. The Welsh is a splendit language. My son Howels —there he is to be proving it—do always say so. Ah! that's 'The rising of the lark,' I was singing that myself years ago. London! to be seure! Now there was singing I was hearing at the play. My son Howels did tak us to the play. I never was hearing or seeing the like in my life. Seure, the Queen Victoria or Prince Albert don't be dressing half as fine as the gentlemen and ladies I was seeing act. The Queen! Oh, Mrs. Rice Rice fach! Ma'am, I was disappointed! Just a bonnet no better than my doater-in-law's. What, sir! a crown?

Not 'sactly a crown; but I was 'specting to see a queen different from other people. Hush! I do hear my son Howels cry, 'Silence!' and they do be playing 'Ap Shenkin.' Not so bad that for Wales, Mrs. Rice Rice. My son Howels do sing beautiful himself, and do play—Hush! look you at him. He don't like toalking in the music. He, he, he, Sir! you do make me laugh. To be seure I don't mean to be marrying again, though men are so much for money. I am thinking you gentlemen 'ould be marrying your grandmothers for the beauty money! Not my son Howels, indeet! He don't be wanting money. He marry his cousin for love. Hush you! There's Pengoch beginning a Penyll! You don't be hearing anything like that in England. Ach a fi! my 'deet, I am sorry. 'God Save the Queen!' and it don't seem an hour since they began!"

Mrs. Jenkins stood up with the rest, and beat time emphatically. Scarcely was the last verse of "God Save the Queen" finished, when Howel came up to his mother, and biting his tongue to keep in his ire, said—

"Mother, I will see you safe first!" and with-

out allowing her time to do more than make a curtsey to her companions, offered her his arm, and led her quickly down the room. He did not venture to speak to her, but nodding to one and another as he passed, said, "I shall be back directly. I am just going to send my mother home first," reached the door, and called for his carriage. It was close at hand, the hour for ordering the carriages being passed; and he speedily put his mother into it. "Drive Mrs. Jenkins home, and return immediately," he exclaimed.

"Which way, Ma'am?" asked the servant.

"Go you down the street, then turn to the right, and the first house with a railing and steps, and a brass knocker," said Mrs. Jenkins, exulting as they drove off, in her new dignity and importance. Howel, on the contrary, returned to the concert room, cursing his folly for having settled in his native county, and wishing his mother anywhere else.

Nevertheless, he received the thanks of the conductor of the concert with bland humility, and expressed his intention of using all his best efforts in behalf of his country and countrymen.

Finally he assisted in cloaking and shawling the ladies, seeing them to their carriages, and bidding them most condescending good nights.

For himself, however, he had not a good night, being haunted with the demons of jealousy and discontent. As soon as Netta and he were alone, he addressed her in very different tones from those which he had called forth for the ladies of the concert room.

"Netta, why do you let Dancy pay you such attentions?" he began, with a scowling brow and flashing eye.

"Why does Mme. Duvet let you pay her such attention?" was Netta's instant reply.

Now Netta was too well pleased with herself, and the effect of her beauty on others, to endure being snubbed, and was very angry that Howel was not pleased also.

"Don't be a fool, Netta. You know Mme. Duvet is doing all she can to catch Owen."

"Oh! jealous are we? well, there were plenty of other ladies who let you pay them attention; why was that, I wonder?"

"I tell you what it is, Netta, I wont allow Dancy to devote himself to you as he does."

"Then you had better tell him so, I aint going to do it; he's your friend, and if he admires me, I think you ought to be proud of it."

"You did nothing but flirt and giggle with him all the evening. What with you on one side, and my mother on the other, I thought I must have left the room."

"Giggle, indeed; I dont know what you mean, Sir; you never eused to say I giggled."

"Can't you say *used*, and not *eused*, you will never cease to be provincial."

"Other folks are provincial, I think, besides me. If you said your own mother was provincial, it 'ould be true enough."

"There again! if you are your own natural self, you leave out all your w's directly; I wish you would be careful, Netta."

"Well, so do the French. I declare I wont speak again to-night, that I wont, you cross, unnatural, unfeeling fellow; and all because you're jealous of Owen. Mme. Duvet says he's the handsomest man she ever saw, and that his beard is enough to win any woman's heart; and I think so too."

"You had better hold your tongue, I think,"

said Howel, stifling a laugh at the idea of Owen's irresistible beard; you never say a word of sense."

"And you never say a kind word," said Netta, breaking down at that last attack, and beginning to cry.

"Now dont blubber, and let all the house hear you."

"I wonder whether leaving out a *w* is half as vulgar as to tell one's wife not to blubber. But I wont speak to you again. I wish I had'nt married you, I do."

"I wish to heaven you hadn't."

At this, Netta began to sob very much, and Howel softened somewhat, but not sufficiently to make any excuse for his conduct; and Netta went to bed, proud, indignant, and unhappy, and wishing herself back again at Glanaravon.

The next morning, Owen remarked that Netta did not speak to Howel at all, and that she was very reserved and strange in her manner to Captain Dancy. The captain, however, took no notice of the change, but whilst he seemed to converse more than usual with Miss

Simpson, anticipated all Netta's wants and wishes with most insinuating tact. Netta, with her changing colour, and half pettish, half shy manner, was still more attractive than Netta affected and silly. Owen thought that Howel felt this, for he went behind her chair, and put his hand on her shoulder, whilst he asked for some more sugar in his tea. Netta's lips pouted, but her eyes brightened as she said in a half whisper, "You're sweeter than you were, Howel."

Howel excused the common-place allusion to the sugar, in consideration of the bright face that looked up at him, and so the storm lulled for the present.

This was Owen's fourth day at Abertewey, and it was a fac-simile of the second, with the exception that Mr. and Miss Simpson, and Mr. Deep did not go to the dinner-party to which the rest went, at a neighbouring country house, and Owen had company to dinner, and was ordered by Netta to do the honours.

Miss Simpson refused to play whist, and Owen declined billiards, so whilst Mr. Deep got as much money as he could out of Mr. Simp-

son, Owen devoted himself and his captivating beard to Miss Simpson.

In the course of conversation, that young lady informed him that she and her brother intended leaving Abertewey the following week, and that she supposed the rest of the party would soon follow for the Ascot Races, and she hoped Owen would join them; she was sure her papa and mamma would be very glad to see him. She also let out that her brother, Captain Dancy, and Howel had heavy bets on the different horses that were to run, and that she expected there would be great excitement. As to Mr. Deep, nobody quite knew what he did, he was so very reserved and quiet.

Owen stayed on at Abertewey day after day, he scarcely knew why. In the first place, he was very well amused, and liked his quarters. In the second, his new friends all liked him; the women for his good looks, and open-hearted civility; the men, because he took his own course, and did not interfere with them, and was a very amusing fellow besides. In the third place, he stayed on because he felt anxious

about Howel and Netta, and their way of beginning life. He had been a man careless of money himself all his days, but he had been, as the saying goes, no one's enemy but his own—he feared that Howel might turn out, not only his own foe but the foe of others, since he perceived that the propensities of his unmonied youth were strengthening and maturing in his monied manhood. He had no opinion of any man who would fleece another, and he saw that Howel and Mr. Deep were preying upon the simple, conceited Mr. Simpson, and the careless lavish, Sir Samuel Spendall. As to Mr. Deep, he watched his opportunity of outwitting either of the four as it offered.

Saturday came and passed, as usual, in visiting and gambling. A good many of the sporting men of the country called to see Howel's famous race-horse, Campaigner, in training for the St. Leger, and to indulge in a little of the sporting gossip of the day, whilst their womankind indulged in more general, and equally intellectual, country gossip. Some of the young men stayed to dinner, and when Miss Simpson had duly played her waltzes, and Netta had

gone through her French songs, *vingt-et-un* was proposed.

Owen took his customary place by Madame Duvet, and played his usual game. But he had not the luck of the previous evening, and soon lost the five pounds he then won, and very nearly the little he possessed besides. When he knew that he was within a few shillings of bankruptcy he said:

"I am very sorry to leave such agreeable society, but if I play any more I shall never get to sea. Look at my purse!" holding it up and shaking it, "it is very nearly empty."

"Luck will change," said Madame Duvet. "You shall go partners with me," pointing to a large heap of money and counters.

"I should be only too happy if I could bring anything to the Bank," said Owen; "but I am too proud to be a penniless partner."

"You need only bring yourself," said Madame Duvet, lowering her voice, and giving such a glance from a pair of fine black eyes as few men could have withstood.

Perhaps Owen would have yielded to it, for he was by no means a hero, had not a sudden

vision of Gladys passed before his mind, followed by one of his mother, just as he had seen her when she bade him that last solemn good night only the Tuesday in that very week. How the vision came he knew not, nor did he pause to ask; but it gave him strength to resist the temptation to begin regular gambling, a vice he had hitherto steadily resisted.

"No," he said, with a merry laugh, "I cannot afford to run into debt."

"Mortgage those entailed farms of yours," said Howel. "I wouldn't mind lending you a trifle on them."

"And I will lend you five pounds without a mortgage," said Netta.

"Can't afford to borrow or mortgage," laughed Owen. "Besides, it is nearly Sunday morning, and we must all break up directly," so he slipped away from his seat, looked on for a few minutes, and when the party were again absorbed in their game, went to bed.

"Well," he thought, "I am not as particular as I ought to be, I know, myself; but to play cards into Sunday morning! I could not do this. What would my poor mother say of

Netta if she knew it? I will have a serious conversation with her to-morrow, when I suppose she will have an hour to spare, and be off on Monday. I almost wish I had never come. That Madame Duvet too! One cannot help paying her attention, and she is very handsome and agreeable; but even if there were no Gladys, she wouldn't suit me; and here am I almost making her believe—. Pshaw! She don't care for me. What a vain fellow I am! But I suppose, as Netta says, they admire my beard. All but Gladys, who won't even look at it, or me. I wonder what she would think of me in the midst of all these fine people, dressed up in Howel's London attire! At any rate I shouln't be half as worthy of her good opinion as when I carried that unfortunate mash to the Alderney, which caused the rumpus with my father. How beautiful the girl looked leaning upon that fortunate animal; and what a fool I made of myself on the other side of her! Well, I was never so happy at home before; and I know it isn't right to leave my father and mother; and I have never done any good all my life; and I, the eldest son, and very nearly thirty years of

age! Poor uncle and aunt gave me an education to very little purpose I fear; and I shall have to answer for the use I have made of it, just as those Sabbath-breakers down-stairs will have to answer for profaning this holy day. Half of it is the force of example. Here is Howel leading Netta to destruction, just as Gladys might lead me to—heaven, I verily believe. Rowland used to argue with me about individual responsibility, and I suppose he was in the right of it."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PATRON'S WIFE.

THE following morning, Netta was not well, and did not appear at the breakfast-table. Howel said she had a bad head-ache, and did not intend going to church.

Breakfast was hurried over to prepare for a six miles' drive to church, and the carriage conveyed the two ladies and three of the gentlemen thither, resplendent with fashion and emblazoned prayer-books. Mr. Deep did not go, and Owen determined to remain at home, in order to secure the desired conversation with Netta.

Mr. Deep, however, seized upon him first of all.

It had not escaped that keen observer, that

Howel had hinted the previous evening that Owen possessed property in reversion; which, indeed, he did, inasmuch as his father was a small landed proprietor, and had several farms of his own, descended to him from his father, and entailed upon Owen.

Mr. Deep was reading some racing calendar, and called Owen's attention to his brother-in-law's name, in connection with the names of men of note on the turf. Also to his horse, Campaigner, as being one of those entered for the Ascot races.

Then he went very cautiously to work, to see whether he could not induce Owen to bet, but he, holding up again his nearly empty purse, laughed his merry laugh and said,

"I am not to be caught, Mr. Deep. I hate horse-racing, and never laid a wager of any kind in my life. That is the only redeeming point in my character. Wild enough I have been, and roving all my life, but I never gambled. Excuse me now, as I must go and see my sister."

He went, accordingly, to Netta's room, and after knocking at the door, and hearing that

she was still in bed, entered unceremoniously. He was at once struck with the difference between the Netta of the Farm, in her little muslin night-cap, that he had often fairly pulled off, to get her to promise to leave the little white-curtained bed—and the lady of Abertewey, in lace and fine linen, reclining beneath satin drapery, in a room furnished most luxuriously.

"Well, Netta, I have you alone at last; and now, if your head is not very bad, we will have a regular old-fashioned gossip," said Owen, stooping to kiss the pretty flushed face of the little sister he dearly loved, despite her follies.

"Did you stop at home for me, Owen? How very kind! I don't think any one else would," said Netta.

"Oh, yes, many others would if it were necessary; but I wanted to have you all to myself. Now I know you have been longing to ask me a hundred questions, but have never got beyond 'how are they all at home?' yet."

Netta blushed, and stammered out, as an apology, that she had never been at leisure one minute all the week.

By degrees, she began to talk of home and

her parents, and Owen was glad to find that, as she did so, she returned to her old, natural self. He told her everything that had happened at Glanaravon since she left it, save and except what related to Gladys. He never even mentioned her name.

Netta had various ebullitions of temper during their conversation, and declared herself greatly aggrieved by her father's conduct.

"But it is just as well," she said, "for our positions are so different, that we should never have got on comfortably. Howel is determined never to make up with father."

"I am afraid he is not likely to have the option," said Owen, gravely. "But you should write and beg his pardon, Netta; you know you acted directly contrary to his wishes."

"I think I would write, Owen, but Howel won't hear of it; he gets furious if I even name Glanaravon, and can't bear any of 'em except you."

"Netta, I think you must use your influence to keep Howel from so much horse-racing, and betting, and card-playing."

"He don't care for what I say, and goes in a passion when I advise him."

"But surely you needn't play yourself as you do, and so late! Only think what my mother—"

"Nonsense, Owen. That would be very fine for Rowland, but you needn't take to lecturing. You never were a pattern brother, or son either."

Owen felt his sister's words more keenly than she intended.

"You are right, Netta, but I hope to mend. I must go away to-morrow in order that I may begin. I mean to make some money this next voyage, and come home, and set up as a steady fellow, and good son."

"And marry Madame Duvet? Do you know she is regularly in love with you; and they say she has a large fortune in France."

"There it may remain for me. But I wish you wouldn't play cards Sundays."

"They all do it in Paris, Owen, and what's the harm? Besides, it was only Saturday night; and we never do play Sundays, as you will see to-day. By the bye, what's gone with

that Methodistical, lack-a-daisical Gladys? Is mother as mad about her as ever?"

"She saved your mother's life when there was no one else to nurse her, and is an angel, if ever there was one!"

Netta opened her large black eyes very wide, and burst out laughing.

"*Ma foi!* is that the last? Well, indeed! I never should have suspected her of making an impression. But she's deep enough for anything. How would father like that? Irish beggar against Abertewey! Come, Howel's better than that any day."

"Handsome is that handsome does," said Owen getting very red. "And Gladys has done well ever since she's been at Glanaravon by every one belonging to us, not excepting yourself."

"Very much obliged to her, I am sure," said Netta, suddenly sitting up in bed, and forgetting her head-ache. "She needn't trouble herself about me. I fancy we are never likely to cross one another again, unless she chances to come a begging to Abertewey, and then perhaps—"

"And then perhaps you would give her a penny and send her on to starve. Oh! Netta, Netta, how were you ever my mother's daughter! But once for all, Netta, I will never hear one word spoken against Gladys. *I* at least am thankful that I still have a mother, and I owe it to her."

"Dear me! you needn't be in such a huff directly, Owen. How was I to suppose you were in love with an Irish—— I beg your pardon, with Miss Gladys O'Grady, County Kilkenney, Ireland? A very pretty name to be sure! But if you don't go away, I shall never be dressed by the time they come from church. There, go like a good boy. I 'ont offend you any more."

"I will go as soon as you have told me what you and Howel did in Paris. I seem to know nothing of your proceedings for ages past."

"It was dreadfully dull there at first, and I thought I should have died of it. I quite longed to be at home again. Howel was a great deal out, and I was alone; but then he gave me a singing master, and a French and dancing mistress, and made me work as hard as

if I was at school again. In about a month Captain Dancy and Mr. Simpson came over, and it was much more pleasant. We used to go to the opera and the play nearly every night, and Captain Dancy introduced me to Madame Duvet, and she introduced me to a great many other ladies, English and French, and we had a good deal of fun. I went to balls and parties, and picture galleries, and the Champs Elysées, and all the fashionable places."

"But where did Howel meet with Mr. Deep?" interrupted Owen.

"Oh! he used to be with him from the first. They are very old friends, Howel says, and have known one another for years; he is a very fashionable man, an attorney by profession. Simpson says that the races couldn't go on without him."

"I should think not," said Owen smiling; "at all events Mr. Simpson's races would be at a stand still without him. Did you, did Howel play much abroad?"

"Yes, I learnt from Madame Duvet; and I think Howel and Mr. Deep and the other

gentlemen used to play all day. You know they have nothing else to do in Paris. It would be very dull there without cards."

"Poor Netta! Is that what you learnt with your little bit of French?"

"I assure you, Owen, Monsieur Letellier, and a dozen other Frenchmen said I had a beautiful accent, and that they would have thought I was born in Paris."

Owen laughed heartily, and Netta was offended, and told him to go away. Just as he was in the act of obeying, Howel appeared.

"What! not up, Netta? How's the head? Owen, there's a letter for you. Llanfach post mark, and from a lady; such a neat, pretty, ladylike hand. How sly you are to have lady correspondents, and not let us know who the charmer is."

"Let me see the direction," said Netta, trying to get the letter from her brother.

"No, no," said Owen, "I must keep my secret for the present; when it is all settled you shall know."

"It makes you blush, however," laughed Howel.

"Is it Mary Jones, or Anne Jenkins, or Amelia Lewis, or Miss Richards, doctor, or Jemima Thomas—or—or—perhaps it is Gladys. Ha, ha! Do you know, Howel, Owen's last is mother's Irish girl, Gladys?"

"Really," sneered Howel. "My mother tells me that she ran away from Glanaravon, and report says with somebody we know of. But report was false as usual; and she turns up again as Miss Gwynne's lady's-maid. Miss Gwynne is about as eccentric as the rest of the clique, and I wish her joy of her bargain. The girl is a beauty, certainly, but—"

"Hush! Howel," cried Netta, "Owen was nearly boxing my ears about her just now."

"Not exactly, Netta," said Owen smothering rising anger, and looking very red; "but I won't hear a word said against her either by man or woman. I am going to read my letter now, and you are going to get up, so I won't stop here any longer," and Owen left the room.

He went at once to his own bed-room, where he hastily broke open the letter Howel had given him, and read as follows:—

"Glanaravon Park, May —.

"Sir,

"I hope you will excuse my boldness in writing to you, but having heard that you are at Abertewey I take the liberty of doing so to tell you that your leaving home has made us all very unhappy. Oh! Mr. Owen, if you would only go back and see your dear mother and honoured father, and learn how lonely they are without you, I think you would give up the sea, or at least remain with them for some time. If you would write to the master, or say a few gentle words to him, he would overlook your going to see your sister, I am almost sure; and indeed, it breaks my heart to know that I was the cause of your going away so suddenly, after you had been so long at home, and so good to your parents.

"Then, dear Mr. Owen, you, who have been always so kind to me, a poor orphan wanderer, and beggar at your father's gate; do, I pray you, add this one favour more to the many you have done me, and return to your parents to take leave of them at least

before you go away. Hoping you will forgive my writing to you on this subject,

"Believe me to remain, Mr. Owen,

"Your obedient and grateful servant,

"GLADYS O'GRADY."

When Owen had read this letter twice, he most devoutly kissed it, and exclaimed,

"This favour, Gladys! aye, and a thousand more, if you will only write to me, and let one little '*dear*' slip in unawares, every time you ask one. I suppose I had better write to father to-day, and follow my letter to-morrow."

Owen sat down at once, and wrote the following brief epistle.

"My dear father,

"If I have offended you in any way I am very sorry. I didn't mean to do so, and shall return to-morrow to ask pardon in person; but remember, I am just as much in love with Gladys as ever, and don't mean to curry favour about her. With best love to mother, I am,

"Your affectionate son,

"OWEN."

That day at luncheon, Owen announced his intention of leaving Abertewey the following morning.

"To see the fair lady who wrote that neat note?" said Howel.

"Probably so," replied Owen.

"Where are you going? we shall miss you dreadfully," said Madame Duvet with an entreating glance.

"I fear we must all leave on Tuesday or Wednesday," said Miss Simpson, "at least if you still intend going to London with us Madame Duvet. I have had a letter from home, positively refusing any further extension of leave, and my brother promises to return with me."

"We may as well all go together then," said Captain Dancy, "as I must be in town this week; and Deep goes up on Tuesday. When are you coming, Jenkins?"

"Only in time for Ascot. I cannot leave home until to-morrow week, and shall probably only remain the race week. Mrs. Jenkins is not going up, and I shall not like to leave her

long alone. Owen, you must run over and see her when I am away."

"I think you had better stay at home, Howel. You will run less risk in taking care of Netta than you will at Ascot."

"Thanks for your advice, but I know my own business best."

"I beg your pardon, Howel, I meant no offence. But although I am going home, I don't know how long I may stay there. Perhaps shall be off to sea in a few days."

"I will use your own words," said Madame Duvet, "and say better stay at home, and take care of—let me see—yourself, I suppose. You will run less risk than at sea."

Owen laughed, and said he would not reply in Howel's words, as he was not sure that he knew his own business best. But he did not add that he should like to take care of Madame Duvet as she wished him to do.

Neither did that afternoon and evening at Abertewey improve Owen's opinion of its inmates. French novels and betting-books were their sermons, and he longed to take his poor little sister Netta away from the contamination

of such society. But she came down stairs after luncheon was over, gay and bright in dress and person, and ready for any amount of frivolity. Her countenance clouded over, when she heard how soon the party was to be broken up; but when Howel assured her he should be only a week absent, and that he would take her to town in June, it cleared again.

Owen took his leave of Abertewey the following morning. Netta whispered "Give my love to mother," and had a very large tear in her black eye, as he walked away, the remembrance of which often haunted him in after days. Howel told him to come again whenever he liked, and accompanied him as far as the Lodge on his homeward journey.

When he reached Glanaravon, he found his mother prepared to receive him with joyful love. His father came in soon after his return, and greeted him as he expected, with a very wrathful lecture, which he bore patiently, and to which he replied as follows,

"Thank you, father; I am much obliged to you for all your abuse, but I don't think I de-

serve it. As I am of age, and a few years passed that period, you must let me have a will of my own."

"I think you have always had one!" roared the Farmer.

"Yes, but not at home, father. I was obliged to run away to get it. But now I mean to stay at home if you will let me. Gladys is gone away, so I dont stay on her account."

"I'm not seure of that. You never stayed on ours."

"Well, I will now. But I can't promise to give up Netta. I've had enough of Abertewey, and don't mean to go there any more as far as I can see at present, and that's all I can say about that matter. As for Gladys, I suppose I must get her consent and yours to marry her, and when I've got them you won't object, I suppose."

"I think you'd best go off to sea again. I don't want any agreements made here."

"I am not going to make any agreements, but as I am your eldest son, and the only one able and willing to stay at home, and help you and mother, I do not see why you should wish

to send me off to sea again, now that I really would be of use to you. I know that I have not been what I ought to have been to you hitherto, and my desire is to make up for the past as well as I can. So, father, you had better take me whilst I am in the humour, and see what you can make of me. Hit the nail while it is hot, and don't discourage me at first starting, or I shall never get on. You know, I'm very shy, and want some one to lend me a helping hand. If you're not too hard upon me, you may make something useful of me yet."

Owen put his hand on his father's shoulder, as he wound up his speech, in a coaxing, boyish way, that had always proved irresistible. The honest Farmer pished and pshawed, and tried to get into a fresh passion, but meeting Owen's saucy eyes, fairly broke down.

"I tell you what it is, Owen, you're a regular scamp, and always were; but you know better than any of 'em to come over me, so—Now, don't be a fool, mother! Just because the good-for-nothing young scoundrel promises to stay at home, you must begin to cry. Name o' good-

ness hold your tongue, and don't be coaxing and kissing me, and all that nonsense. He 'ont keep his promise a month, you shall see."

"So she shall, father, and you and I will shake hands upon it; and I'll be a good boy, and never be naughty any more."

Father and son shook hands, and mother and son embraced, and future chapters will show whether Owen kept his word.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MAN OF THE WORLD.

Two or three months passed, and no particular event happened either at the Park or Farm, and summer came round again. Gladys was now established at the former, and Owen at the latter, but, although they had seen one another frequently at church or at a distance, they had scarcely spoken since they parted on the evening of their remarkable meeting in the cow-house. Gladys scrupulously avoided Owen, and all his endeavours to fall in with her were fruitless.

Colonel Vaughan was again at Glanaravon, and Freda was in buoyant spirits. So, indeed, were her neighbours, the Nugents ; Miss Nugent, in particular. She was to be of age in a few

days, and grand preparations were making to celebrate the event.

On the morning on which we take up our Glanaravon narrative, Miss Nugent is inflicting herself upon Miss Gwynne, who longs to tell her to go away, but is too polite to do so.

"You know, Freda," she says, "I have been longing to be of age for yearth. Mamma ath been tho thrict, and kept me tho clothe, that I never dared to thpeak to a gentleman. Now I can do ath I like."

"And what will you have to say?" asked Freda, bluntly. "I never hear you venture upon many topics, when you have an opportunity."

"Oh, Freda! there are tho many thingth."

"Just tell me one or two."

"Let me thee. Ballth and contherth, and the opera when I go to London, and—and—muthic—"

"Is that all?"

"You are tho tirethome, Freda; of courthe there are other thingth, but one cannot think of them all at onthe. Every one ithent tho clever ath you. Colonel Vaughan thaid I talked quite

enough for any young lady. Gentlemen didn't like ladieth who talked too much."

"Indeed! Where was your mamma when he said that?"

"Oh! the didn't hear him. Do you know I think the liketh Colonel Vaughan, and ith jealouth of me. He thaid he would come down when I came of age, and tho he did, you thee, Freda."

"To your mamma, or you?"

"To me quite alone. But you needn't look tho croth and fierthe, Freda. I couldn't help hith being polite to me, and paying me complimenth."

"What compliments?"

"Oh! I can't tell you, he thaid so much about my lookth, that I am thure he made me bluth."

"Did you believe him."

"Yeth; and I think he liketh me better than mamma."

"Do you think there is any one else in the world besides your mamma and yourself?"

"Well, yeth, of courth."

"Then why don't you sometimes talk of

some one else? Do you like Colonel Vaughan, for instance?"

"Oh! I never thaw any one in my life I like tho much, except Rowland Prothero. He ith younger. Mamma thaith—"

"There again, Wilhelmina!"

"I forgot—you are tho quick, Freda. Don't you like Colonel Vaughan?"

"Pretty well sometimes."

"What a colour you have, Freda. You thouldn't draw tho much. I with I had a tathte for drawing. Colonel Vaughan drawth tho well?"

"What can his drawing well have to do with your drawing?"

"He would look over my drawing then ath he doth yourth's, Freda. He thaith you are very clever. But you mutht be nearly five-and-twenty Freda; and he thaith no woman ought ever to be more than twenty-one."

"When did he favour you with that remark? I think I once heard him say twenty-five was the most charming age of all."

At this part of the conversation, the subject of it entered the room, and whilst Freda's colour

rose higher and higher, and she stooped more closely over her drawing, Miss Nugent got up and greeted him with great delight. Freda made up her mind not to speak, that she might listen to the conversation that ensued.

"Are all the preparations progressing, Miss Nugent? What are we to do to celebrate the great event?" asked the Colonel.

"There ith to be an oxth roathed for the poor people; and tea on the lawn; and a ball in the evening, you know, Colonel."

"Oh, yes, I am looking forwards to that, and to the first dance. Remember you promised me."

"Oh, yeth, I am thure of plenty of partnerth."

"I should imagine so. We men must have very bad taste if we let you sit down. Did you walk here this morning?"

"No, I rode. The hortheth are taken round. I have been here a long time with Freda. It ith thuch a nice morning, ithn't it, Colonel Vaughan?"

"Delightful! What do you mean to do when you are your own mistress? I quite

fancy how grand you will feel when you have struck the magic hour."

"I dare thay I thall be jutht the thame, unleth I get married."

Freda glances up, and perceives a smile of amusement on Colonel Vaughan's lips, and the usual calm inanity on Miss Nugent's handsome features.

"That will depend on yourself, I am sure," said the Colonel.

Freda looks again, and sees the Colonel's magnificent eyes fixed on the young lady, who returns his glance, and simpers out—

"I dare thay it will."

Colonel Vaughan turns suddenly, and encounters Freda's glance.

"How does the drawing get on, Freda? Capitally! What a sky! quite artistic."

This is said whilst looking over Freda's shoulder, but she does not respond to the remark.

"I wath jutht thaying I with I could draw. It mutht be thuth a nithe amuthement."

"Very; how is Lady Mary, to-day? I am ashamed to say I forgot to ask for her."

"Very well, thank you. The thaid you promithed to come over and help to arrange the decorationth. I hope you will."

"Thank you, yes. Perhaps Miss Gwynne will ride over with me to-morrow; will you Freda?"

"I am engaged to-morrow," said Freda, shortly.

"You will come at any rate, if Freda wont?" said Miss Nugent, "the alwayth thayth the ith engaged when we athk her; now dont be engaged on Thurthday. I muth go now; will you be tho kind ath to ring for the hortheth, Colonel Vaughan?"

The horses were ordered, and the Colonel assisted the young heiress to mount. She looked remarkably well on horseback, and even Freda was obliged to allow that she and her grey mare would have made a fine equestrian statue. She saw Colonel Vaughan look at her, and even watch her down the drive; when he returned to the drawing-room, he said,

"What is the matter, Miss Freda? have the domestic deities been adverse this morning? I am afraid you are very—cross."

"Thank you, Colonel Vaughan, I am not at all—cross."

"Have I had the misfortune to offend you?"

"You? by no means. But I do not wish to assist in any of the Nugent decorations. I am not so fond of the family as you may imagine; Lady Mary and Miss Nugent are less than indifferent to me. Lady Mary is a mere manœuvrer, that no straight-forward person could like; and Miss Nugent is a mere handsome wax figure, with such clever machinery inside, that she can literally say the words, 'mamma thaith;' I have heard of a doll who could say mamma, but she is still cleverer."

Colonel Vaughan bit his lips, knit his forehead, but smiled.

"You are severe upon your neighbours, Freda."

"Do you admire them then? do you think Miss Nugent altogether charming? or will she be perfect in your eyes the day after to-morrow?"

"If perfection consists in being a beauty and an heiress, I need not go away from Glanaravon to seek one, Freda."

"Do you stereotype your compliments? I hear that you pay them wherever you go, and I hate compliments, particularly from people whose good opinion I value. Besides, I am neither a beauty nor an heiress, and to be complimented in almost the same words as Miss Nugent, is too contemptible."

"You do not suppose that I class you together, Freda?"

"I am thankful to say that you cannot do that, Colonel Vaughan, at least if I know myself at all; but after all, I may be infinitely her inferior."

Freda got up from her drawing with a very flushed face; she knew she had said more than she meant to say, and that Colonel Vaughan was scrutinizing her with his calm, collected mind, and penetrating eyes.

"I am going out now, and you promised to ride with papa, I think," she said abruptly.

"But you must not go until you have told me how I have displeased you," said Colonel Vaughan, rising and detaining her; he had such a power over her, that he always wormed her thoughts out of her.

"I did not like to hear you saying what you did not mean, to Miss Nugent," said Freda, as if she were obliged to make a confession; "and I think it beneath a man like you to pay frivolous compliments to a girl you must despise."

"Oh, is that all! I make a point of complimenting handsome girls, *pour passer le temps;* it is the only way of getting on with half of them. You must forgive me this once."

Freda looked at him, and even he, clever as he was, could not tell whether her glance expressed pity, contempt, or love. She turned away, and left the room without speaking; he made another movement to detain her, but she was gone; his thoughts were as follows.

"Charming girl! yes, she is charming; of a truthful, noble, trusting nature; still too *prononcée* for a woman. I scarcely think I love, much as I must admire that sort of girl; and as a wife, I should be afraid of her. Yet she provokes me, interests me. She is jealous of those Nugents, and if she doesn't take care, they will cut her out, mother and daughter, with their manœuvres and wax; and she will be heiress of Glanaravon no longer. Better the

waxen heiress, Miss Nugent, with thirty thousand pounds in possession in some thirty-six hours, than the iron heiress, Miss Gwynne, with Glanaravon *in futuro*.

"Moreover, the one may be moulded into any shape one pleases—the other must have her own opinion, and her own way, unless a man beat her into subjection. Certainly, few people were ever more fortunately, or perplexingly placed, than I am just now.

"Between two young women, handsome, rich, of good family; if I mistake not, in love with me, and to be had for the asking. But if I married Freda, Mr. Gwynne would marry Lady Nugent directly, and then, no one could tell what would become of the property. If on the other hand, I were to marry Miss Nugent, I should incur the utmost contempt of which Miss Gwynne is capable, and should not wholly esteem myself. But why am I thinking of marrying at all? Because I am forty years old, and found a grey hair in my whiskers yesterday; because I am tired of an unsettled life, and should like to clear off the old place, and end my days there; and because, after all,

a married man has a better position than a single one. If that girl, Gladys, were in the place of either heiress, I would not hesitate a moment. I declare she would grace a coronet; no wonder all the young men round are in love with her. And yet, meet her when I will, I can scarcely get more than 'yes,' and 'no,' out of her.

"It is utterly impossible, she can be what she seems, or is supposed to be. I never saw more thoroughly aristocratic beauty in our most aristocratic circles. Miss Nugent is as handsome as a woman can well be, in form and feature; but her eyes are like two frozen pools, whereas this Gladys, are literally two deep blue lakes with stars shining into them, or out of them, or something or other that a poet would describe better than I do. Well, what a fool I am! 'A dream of fair women,' in my fortieth year, just as I dreamt of them in my sixteenth. The Fates must decide for me, only I wish they would clear up the mystery that hangs over that girl, and give her Miss Nugent's thirty-thousand pounds."

Such were the thoughts that rushed through

Colonel Vaughan's mind, as he sat, apparently looking at Freda's drawing in the place that she had vacated. We have unveiled a portion of his mind, because he is too good a tactician to unveil it himself. It is needless to say, that this fascinating man, who has that nameless power which some men possess, of making all women love him, has, himself, no heart to bestow on any one. Beyond the gratification of the moment, he is totally indifferent to all the consequences of his powers. He is not a bad man, he would not do any thing that the world—his world at least—would consider dishonourable; but as to reflecting upon the cruelty of inflicting wounds, never to be healed, upon the hearts of young ladies—why, he would as soon reflect upon the wounds he gave an enemy in the battle-field. He considers Cupid as fair game as Mars, and thinks that if women will be weak, and if he is irresistible, it is no fault of his, but rather their and his misfortune.

Young ladies! the vulgar saying that a woman should never give her heart to a man until she is asked for it, is, like many vulgar sayings, a good one. Colonel Vaughan is the

type of a class amongst which all are liable to be thrown, and although men of his talent, knowledge of the world, and apparent sincerity are rare, you may each of you meet with one such. If you do, beware of falling in love with him, until he plainly tells you that he is in love with you, and asks if you are willing to marry him.

Colonel Vaughan leaves the drawing-room in search of Mr. Gwynne, humming a little Scotch air, the *refrain* of which is "and troth I'll wed ye 'a," a thing he has often wished he could actually do.

He finds Mr. Gwynne in his library, and reminds him of the promised ride. The horses are ordered, and they are soon trotting down the drive. As if by mutual consent, they take the turn that leads to Pentre, Lady Mary Nugent's place. It is about a mile from Glanaravon, and beautifully situated on a hill that commands a fine prospect of dale, wood, and river.

The handsome mother and daughter are at home, and hail the arrivals with great glee. As Lady Mary is not at all certain that Colonel

Vaughan's attentions are not exclusively meant for her, she divides her civilities with a charming tact between the two gentlemen, and looks so captivating whilst she does so, that the Colonel wishes that her statue-like daughter had a little of her animation.

Everything that art and taste can devise, is collected to adorn the ladies and their abode, and if nature is lacking within doors, she is profuse in her gifts without.

There is nothing worth recording in the conversation; if Colonel Vaughan had thought it over afterwards, he would probably have laughed at the platitudes he had uttered, and wondered why people paid morning visits. The coming of age was a grand topic, and the Colonel promised to go again the following day, and "help in the decorations."

When the gentlemen took their leave, Mr. Gwynne proposed a ride through his plantations, which he was improving and enlarging. The went accordingly. On their way they stopped at a small farm, to enquire for one of Mr. Gwynne's tenants who was dangerously ill. Mr. Gwynne dismounted, and as he en-

tered the house, Gladys came out; she curtseyed as she passed Colonel Vaughan, who said,

"How is the invalid, Gladys? I take it for granted, you have been to see him."

"Yes, Sir, Miss Gwynne sent me with some jelley. He is better I hope."

"And are you going home now?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Stay one moment; will you give the poor man this half-crown when you see him again."

Gladys approached, and took the half crown, but with it there was half a sovereign.

"The rest is for yourself, to do what you like with," added the Colonel, in a low voice.

"Thank you, Sir, but I never take money," said Gladys, leaving the gold in his hand, "I do not need it."

"Give it to the poor, then," said the Colonel, letting it drop, and looking annoyed.

"Certainly, Sir, if you wish it; I will tell Miss Gwynne, and she will know to whom to give it."

"By no means—I mean it for you."

"Sir, you will excuse me, I would rather not," said Gladys, curtseying again, and hastening on.

Colonel Vaughan called to a boy who was near, and told him to pick up the money, and give it to him.

"How often does that young lady come here?" he asked.

"Almost every day, Sir," was the reply.

"At what time?"

"In the afternoon, Sir, from three to five, or thereabouts."

"Goes back in time to help Miss Gwynne dress for dinner," thought the Colonel, "what a lovely face it is! And what grace of movement."

He watched Gladys cross the farm-yard, and disappear in the plantations, through which there was a private path to the house.

Mr. Gwynne and he passed her again, as they rode on, and she curtseyed once more, Mr. Gwynne nodding to her kindly as she looked at him.

"Who *is* that girl, Mr. Gwynne?"

"Oh! my daughter's maid, I believe. A

very pretty, modest young woman, and all that sort of thing. Freda is very fond of her."

They struck into another path, and Colonel Vaughan saw no more of Gladys that day, though he peeped into various stray corners of the house, in the hope of doing so. Moreover, he found Freda captious and cross, and particularly annoyed at his and her father's visit to Pentre. He punished her by playing chess with her father nearly all the evening, and leaving her to a variety of reflections that were anything but satisfactory to her.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TEMPTER.

"I PARTICULARLY wish you to go, Gladys, and there will be plenty of time. He was worse when I saw him yesterday, and I promised to send you to-day to read to him, and take him some wine. I shall not want you till five, and my dress is quite ready. They dine at half-past six, and the evening party are invited for nine, I believe."

This was said by Miss Gwynne to Gladys, at about half-past two o'clock, on the day of Miss Nugent's festivities.

"Very well, Ma'am," said Gladys, "I will make as much haste as possible."

"Do you know where Colonel Vaughan is, Gladys?" asked Miss Gwynne.

"I heard some one say, Ma'am, that he and Mr. Gwynne had walked to Pentre, to see the dinner on the lawn."

"Oh! By the way, would you have liked to have gone to see these said diversions? If so, I can send some one else with the wine."

"Oh no, thank you, Ma'am. I would much rather walk to see poor Lloyd."

"Then you had better make haste."

Gladys was soon on her way, through the wood, to the farm mentioned in the last chapter. She thoroughly enjoyed her walk on that lovely July day, and thought she had never heard the birds sing so sweetly before.

In truth, Gladys had not been so happy since her sorrows as she was now. She felt independent, and placed in a position where she knew her exact duties. She devoted herself and her time wholly to Miss Gwynne, and was repaid, not only by regular wages, but by kindness, and even affection from her mistress.

There was increased colour on her cheek, brightness in her eyes, mirth in her smile, elasticity in her step, and life in her whole

being as she entered the cottage whither she was sent.

She found her patient better, and having given him some wine, read to him, and helped his wife to make his bed. She was preparing to leave the farm, when Owen made his appearance. He came, ostensibly, to see the sick man, but prefaced his visit to him by shaking hands with Gladys, and talking to her.

When she left the house, he followed her into the yard.

"I have caught you at last, Gladys. You always run away from me as if I were a monster."

"No, Mr. Owen, you are mistaken."

"Then why don't you come and see us oftener?"

"Because I have a great deal to do, Sir; and I do not think Mr. Prothero wishes to see me."

"You thrive upon your absence, Gladys. I never saw anyone look so much better."

"How is the dear mistress, Mr. Owen? and your father? and Lion? and the cows? and—and—"

"Not so fast, Gladys. Come and see. They are all quite well. And the Alderney is my particular charge."

Gladys blushed and smiled.

"You see I came home because you told me, and am as steady as old Time. Don't I look so? I am going to shave off my beard—do you approve?"

"No," said Gladys, laughing. She scarcely knew why she felt more at ease with Owen in her present than in her past position.

"Then I won't do it. Did you hear that I was going to be married to Miss Richards, Dr. Richards' daughter?"

"Yes, Sir. I was told so."

Why did Gladys blush so very much more than before, and say the "Sir" so stiffly?

"Then you may deny it, for it is not true. I have not changed, Gladys, since—do you remember the Alderney?"

Gladys' smile said that she did.

"But I am on parole, both to you and my father. I am quite ready to break it with your leave."

"I must go, Mr. Owen—Miss Gwynne will

be waiting for me. Will you give my duty to the dear mistress."

"I will take your love to her, Gladys, and keep half of it. May I walk with you?"

"If you please, not, Mr. Owen. I would rather not."

"Are you happy? just tell me this."

"Very—very. Miss Gwynne is so good. I can only be happy. Good bye, Mr. Owen."

"Good bye, dear Gladys," said Owen, pressing her trembling hand that she held out to him, and opening the farm-yard gate for her to go out.

As Gladys hurried on with a light heart, and light step, she little thought that those kind eyes which had looked so lovingly at her, were clouded with the mists of jealousy in less than five minutes after she had left the farm. She could not guess that the boy who had picked up the half sovereign for Colonel Vaughan would give Owen the history of the same, and would tell him that Gladys had dropped it, but that he was pretty sure she had more money in her hand.

Unconscious of anything but sunshine above

and within, she hastened on, thinking of Owen, in spite of her resolution not to think of him—a resolution she was making and breaking from morning till night. Her thoughts were turned to another channel, however, by the appearance of Colonel Vaughan, who suddenly came upon her from one of the many cross-paths in the wood.

She curtseyed slightly, and was about to pass him, but he turned and walked with her.

"Gladys," he began, "I wish to know why you refused the money I offered you yesterday."

"Because, Sir, I did not think it right to take it," answered Gladys, promptly.

"Why? what harm could there have been?"

Gladys quickened her steps, but did not answer.

"Not so fast, Gladys. I have you at last, in spite of yourself. You have avoided me hitherto, both when you were at Prothero's and here, and purposely misunderstood me—now you must walk through the wood with me, and at my pace, for I must speak to you."

"Sir, Miss Gwynne expects me early," said Gladys with wonderful dignity of manner, which

was not lost upon the Colonel—"*she* is my mistress, and I must obey her. I shall be obliged by your letting me go on."

"We will both go on, but leisurely and together. I have much to say to you, and I may not have another opportunity."

Gladys tried to pass on, but finding that Colonel Vaughan's hand was on her arm, and that he was resolved to detain her, she endeavoured to summon up all her resolution and sense, and to answer his questions, whatever they might be, according to what she might think right.

"You will be so good as to account to my mistress for this delay, Sir," she said. "I am no longer a free agent."

"I shall do no such thing; neither will you, I hope."

"I most certainly shall, Sir, if necessary."

"Never mind; I must know, at all risks, who and what you are."

"I am Irish on my father's side, and Welsh on my mother's; my name is O'Grady."

"But you were not born in the position you now occupy?"

"My father was a Corporal in the Welsh Fusiliers; I was brought up to work for my bread."

"And your mother?"

"Was the daughter, I believe of a clergyman."

"I was sure of that—and she educated you?"

"She taught me what she herself knew."

"What brought you into Wales?"

"Starvation."

"How did you get to Mr. Prothero's?"

"I was a beggar and they took me in out of charity."

"Why did you leave them and come here?"

"Because they wished it."

"Say because Owen Prothero was in love with you."

No answer.

"Do you love that rough sailor?"

No answer.

"I must know all, Gladys. I must and will."

"Colonel Vaughan, I shall only answer such questions as you, as a gentleman, may *think*

you have a right to ask a friendless girl, whom you forcibly detain. You *know* you have no right to ask this."

Colonel Vaughan looked at the usually shy girl, and saw a spirit and resolution in her bearing that he had not believed were in her.

"I beg your pardon, Gladys, I was wrong. Can you endure the state of dependence you are now in?"

"I consider myself independent. I work for my bread, and am paid for it."

"But you might be independent without working."

"Impossible, unless beggary is independence."

"Quite possible; I am sure you must feel your dependence on such an imperious mistress as you now have."

"My present mistress, Sir, Miss Gwynne is far too noble to let any one feel dependent, even those who are, like myself, wholly her servants."

"You like Miss Gwynne?"

"I respect and love her. Perhaps you will now let me go to her."

"Not yet. This independence! I could make you independent."

"You! How? Impossible!"

"I love you Gladys."

"Me! This to me! Is it to insult me that you have detained me? Let me go, Sir—I insist—and my mistress! You, Colonel Vaughan, who have been paying her such attentions as no man has a right to pay a lady unless he loves her, to dare to say this to me, and I a servant in her house. You, sharing her father's hospitality, to deceive her, and insult me. What have I done to encourage you to speak thus to me?"

Gladys stood still amidst the lights and shadows of the sun-crowned trees, and looked the Colonel steadily in the face. That look, voice, manner, completed the conquest that had been maturing for weeks and months. The flushed cheek, the sparkling eyes, the tall, slight, erect figure, the voice, deportment—all were those of a lady in mind as well as person.

"Gladys, hear me calmly. I do not wish to insult you; I have never meant anything by my attentions to Miss Gwynne."

"Then you are a—"

Gladys checked herself.

"A villain, you would say. Not at all. I merely pay Miss Gwynne the civilities due to her. I am not obliged to fall in love with every young lady in whose father's house I am visiting. But I admired you the first moment I saw you; and now, at this moment, I vow that I love you as I never loved in my life before."

They stood face to face, looking at each other. Gladys' eyes drooped before the gaze of the Colonel.

"This to me!" she exclaimed, "and yet you say you do not insult me! Let me go, Sir, I insist!"

She tried to hasten on, but the strong hand was again on her arm.

"I do not insult you, Gladys, I honour and respect you. If you will only say you love me, I will—yes, I will—I think, at least—I will marry you privately, and take you abroad at once. I vow this is more than I ever said to any woman in my life before."

"And you will repent having said it to me before the night is out, Colonel Vaughan, and

you do not mean it. Think of who I am; think of Miss Gwynne; think of yourself. Oh! this is cruel, cruel jesting to all!"

"I was never more serious in my life."

As Colonel Vaughan said this, he saw nothing, thought of nothing, but the peculiar beauty of the creature who stood, flushed and agitated, at his side. He forgot himself and his purposes, in his temporary blind admiration.

"Now, Gladys, I await your answer," he said, not doubting what that answer would be.

"I have no answer to give, Sir, because I know, that even if you now think yourself in earnest, you will be no longer so to-night."

"Before we leave this wood, girl, I will and must have an answer, and beware how you irritate me."

He seized her hand as he spoke, and held it tight.

"You will release me before I answer you, Sir; I have gone through too many dangers and temptations to be frightened into speech."

He released her hand, but kept his eyes fixed on her face. She did not quail, though she felt her heart beat violently.

"If you are serious, Sir, I ought, I suppose, to be grateful for so strange an honour; but I do not believe you are so, and my answer is, that a servant such as I, can have nothing to say to a gentleman such as you."

"A servant! You will be no longer a servant. You are not one at this moment."

Again he seized her hand. She was frightened, but did not lose her self-command.

"Sir, you had now better let me return home. Miss Gwynne will wonder what has become of me. It is time that she should be ready—that you, Sir, should be ready. What will she think and say?"

"I care not; nothing shall turn me from my purpose. You shall not leave this wood until you promise."

"Then I shall never leave it, Sir; and if you persist in detaining me, I will make known to every one, how a gentleman can demean himself to a poor, unprotected girl, who has no friend near her but her God. To Him I appeal for help in this hour, when you, Sir, a gentleman and a Christian, so far forget yourself as to insult and persecute me."

As Gladys spoke, she lifted her eyes solemnly to heaven—both her hands were held by Colonel Vaughan.

As he gazed at her, he suddenly relaxed his hold, saying, "You are a wonderful girl! I do not persecute you, but I will not give you up."

No sooner did Gladys feel the grasp loosen, than she made a sudden bound, almost a leap, onwards, and ran with incredible swiftness through the path.

Colonel Vaughan pursued her, but soon found that she ran more swiftly than he did. However, he would not give up the chase, and in spite of the hot sun, ran on, in somewhat undignified haste and anger.

Every one knows that winding paths in plantations are not always perfectly smooth. So found our gallant Colonel to his cost.

With his eyes fixed on the quickly vanishing form of Gladys, how was he to see the gnarled root of an oak, that sprung up through the ground, directly in his path? His foot caught in it, and he fell with considerable violence upon his face on the ground. He got up again as

quickly as he could, cursing his carelessness and folly.

He felt that he had knocked his somewhat prominent nose rather severely, and to his great dismay, found that it was bleeding copiously.

All further pursuit was out of the question. He must staunch the blood of the much-offending member, and being rather giddy for the moment, sat down to do so.

It is said that any sudden and violent blow sobers a drunkard; so did this unforeseen fall sober the mental intoxication of the Colonel. As his nose bled, so did his intellect clear. Bleeding, on the old system, was never more successful.

This was truly a descent, if not from the sublime, at least, from the heroic to the ridiculous. Panting with heat, bleeding, apostrophizing, the lover came to his senses.

Partly aloud, at intervals, partly muttered between his teeth, he gave forth the following sentences; and when he became calm, he thought the subsequent thoughts, which, although he did not rail them forth against the rooks and

smaller birds, we will venture to repeat, for the further elucidating the mystery of his mind.

"Fool to let go her arm! No; fool to take it at all! What a girl! I never saw such—pho! How it bleeds! Will it never stop! They'll think there's been a murder here. What could possess me to run after her? A rustic coquette! Rustic! No; a most courtly one. She had me fairly in her power. But she has too much sense to tell. 'Pon my word, I never loved any one so much before. Disgusting! All over my cravat. If I were to meet any one? If Freda were to see me, what would she think, or say? And I actually talked of marriage. Let me see; what did I say? But nobody could believe her. Pshaw! what a fool I have been. Suppose she had taken me at my word, and accepted me, I wonder how I could have got out of it! There is such a power in her eyes, that as long as I am looking at them she could make me do anything. I wish she was the heiress, and not Miss Nugent. Yes; and I shall be too late for dinner. What will they think? I vow, I am so giddy I can scarcely walk; and this

horrible bleeding won't stop. I must stuff this bunch of keys down my back, and see what that will do. Well! if that isn't enough to cool any one's courage, together with this disgusting —. I must go on, and get into my room as quickly as possible. I vow, it is just six o'clock. If she tells Freda! But she won't do that—no woman ever does. She'll think it over, and manage to let me see her again—and then—and then—I shall not be able to resist her eyes, and she shall not be able to resist mine. The witch! A mere servant to do what no woman ever has done, or ever would do—positively refuse me. But she knows her power, I dare say. There! it is bleeding again, and I thought I had stopped it. I am just at home though, and if I go round by the stables no one can make any remarks. Confound this—here's the coachman in full hue and cry after me. Yes, I will dress directly. Thomas! tell your master not to wait. The heat has made my nose bleed, and detained me. If he and Miss Gwynne will go on, you can drive back for me, and I shall be in time for the ball. Beg them to make my excuses to Lady Mary Nugent,

and explain how it is. You are quite right. It has bled tremendously ; but I shall stop it as soon as I get to my room."

It need not be said that the concluding portion of Colonel Vaughan's speech was addressed to a servant, who came in search of him with the intelligence that the carriage was waiting, and his master ready. He managed to get to his room, however, unperceived, where we will leave him to dress and recover himself at his leisure.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RIVALS.

We will now return to Miss Gwynne, who pursued her usual avocations until about five o'clock, and then began to wonder what detained Gladys. However, as she was quite independent of maids in her toilette, she went to her room and began to dress herself at the usual hour. She found all her attire already spread upon the bed, as if Gladys anticipated being late; nothing was wanting, and she had nothing to do but to dress.

As it happened, however, she was particularly anxious to look her best that evening; why, she would not even ask herself; but she, who was usually careless of what she wore, provided she were properly attired, began to fidget over

wreaths and ornaments as if she were going to her first ball.

"Miss Nugent will be all jewels," she said, taking up a set of pearls that was on the dressing-table. "At any rate, I will not be like her. And, of course, she will wear white, so I shall change my mind, and won't wear white. Where is Gladys? The only evening I ever really wanted her, she is out of the way."

Miss Gwynne rang her bell violently, and the housemaid answered it.

"Send Gladys. Surely she is come back."

"No, Ma'am. I can't think where she is. I went a little way to look for her, but she is not in sight. Can I do anything, Ma'am?"

"No, thank you; but send Gladys as soon as she comes. Provoking," continued Miss Gwynne, turning out two or three shelves of a large wardrobe. "Where are the trimmings of that blue dress? He said I looked best in blue, and so, I think, I do. That wreath of blue forget-me-nots and lilies of the valley, where in the world is it? But forget-me-nots are so ridiculously sentimental; and the turquoise ornaments? I suppose I must wear the

bracelets and locket. Oh! here they are; and here are the flowers and trimmings in a box, in the neatest possible order."

Miss Gwynne began to do her hair. "I declare, I have forgotten how to do anything since Gladys has been with me. I cannot put up this braid neatly. I must wait, and it is nearly six o'clock, and dinner at half-past. What does it matter how I look? I dare say Miss Nugent will look twenty times as well, and her mother will dress her up to perfection. But he *cannot* care for such a girl as that. It is impossible; and he always looks at me with such interest, and has such a kind manner, and says things that convey so much. But if he really cares for me, why does he not say so? He knows papa would consent, and—but he does not know that; I never—Ah! here she is at last! Come in! Where have you been, Gladys? It really is too provoking that you should have stayed so long, when you knew that I particularly wanted you to-day."

Gladys enters the room pale and breathless, just as Miss Gwynne is endeavouring to fasten in the wreath of forget-me-nots and lilies. She

does not turn round, and is at the moment too much engrossed with her own appearance to think of Gladys.

"Come quickly and finish my hair, and put in this wreath. We ought to be starting now."

Gladys obeys without speaking, and steadying her nerves and fingers as best she may, begins to arrange a most elegant and becoming wreath round her young mistress's head. Whilst she does this, and afterwards dresses her and fastens on the turquoise ornaments, she endeavours to collect her thoughts, and to summon courage for what she has resolved to do and say.

Gladys has long known Miss Gwynne's secret; as she discovered that she did not care for Rowland, so she has found out that she cares over much for Colonel Vaughan. She now knows that he is not worthy of her, and that if he should ever ask her to marry him, it would be that he might gain possession of Glanaravon, and not of the warm, sincere heart of its mistress. Gladys feels sure that a man who could say such words as Colonel Vaughan said to her,

whether meant seriously or not, could not be worthy of Miss Gwynne; and she determines to open that young lady's eyes to the real state of his mind, even if she loses her favour for ever by so doing.

"I shall save her," thinks Gladys, "if I ruin my own happiness."

When the dressing is completed, Freda stands before a cheval glass to see that all is right. Gladys has never before seen her examine every portion of her attire so minutely, or look so satisfied with the survey. In truth she never before saw her look so handsome, or so perfectly well dressed. The full, light, many skirted blue dress, with its bouquets of forget-me-nots and lilies, its fringes and ribbons, suits so well the fine complexion of the very distinguished looking girl who wears it—whilst the wreath slightly crowns the well shaped head, and falls gracefully down the neck and back in most becoming simplicity and elegance.

Poor Freda! She has more colour than usual, more animation in her eyes, and more anxiety at her heart. Were she to analyze her feelings, she would thoroughly despise herself for

the envy, vanity, and distrust she would find in them, and think herself unworthy of the name of woman for allowing herself to study to gain the attentions of any man who might feel disposed to give them to another. But her pride is for a time swamped in her weakness; and the hitherto haughty and unsusceptible Miss Gwynne is no better than the most sentimental of school girls.

Whilst Gladys is putting the last pin into the dress and Freda is still watching her own shadow, there is a knock at the door.

"Make haste, Gladys. The carriage, I suppose. Come in," says Freda.

"Mr. Gwynne wishes to know, Ma'am, whether you have seen Colonel Vaughan, or whether he intends dressing at Pentre," asks the servant who opens the door.

"I have not seen him since the morning, and do not know what he means to do," is the reply. "Did you see anything of him when you were out, Gladys?" continues Miss Gwynne, after the servant has left the room.

As she makes the enquiry, she, for the first time catches the reflection of Gladys' face in the

glass, and is struck with its unusual pallor. She turns quickly and looks at the girl herself.

"What is the matter, Gladys? Something must have happened? It must have something to do with Colonel Vaughan. Did you see him? Speak."

"Yes, Ma'am, I saw him in the wood."

"And is that the reason you are looking so frightened? What has happened to him? Speak, I say, or I must ring the bell, and send some one in search of him."

With her usual impetuosity, Freda's hand was on the bell. Gladys exclaimed quickly,

"Do not ring, Miss Gwynne. I can tell you all I know. Nothing has happened to injure Colonel Vaughan, bodily at least."

"What do you mean, girl?" said Miss Gwynne, turning round again and facing Gladys.

Gladys stood before her mistress with clasped hands, heaving breast, quivering lips, and downcast eyes. She tried to summon courage and words, but neither would come. How could she crush the love and hopes of one so

dear to her ? her benefactress, her all ? But it must be done.

With one great effort she began, and in as few words as possible, without comment or gloss, related what had passed between her and Colonel Vaughan. She told all, as nearly as she could remember, in his own words, merely omitting what he had said about Miss Gwynne.

As she spoke, she felt like a culprit before a judge, who, though conscious of his innocence, has not courage to meet the glance of him on whom his fate depends. But not on her own account had she that throbbing fear at her heart ; she felt for her mistress alone.

That mistress stood erect, towering above the drooping girl, like a queen above a slave or suppliant. Red and pale by turns, with compressed lips and flashing eyes, she listened to the tale.

When it was finished, she, too, strove for words, but none came ; so she laughed a short, sarcastic laugh, and moved back a few paces. At last,

" Why do you tell me this ridiculous tale ? Have you no better confidante for such absurd

imaginations? You have dreamt it Gladys. I do not believe you. Go!"

Gladys gave one penetrating, truthful look at her mistress, before which the defiant glance fell; but the rigid features alarmed her, and she would fain have remained, had not another. "Go! I do not want you any longer!" sent her, at once, from the room.

When Gladys was gone, Miss Gwynne sat down upon the nearest chair, and covered her face with her hands.

Another knock at the door.

"Come in! What do you want?" she exclaimed in a suppressed voice.

"My master says the carriage is ready, and he thinks you had better go, Ma'am. Colonel Vaughan has just come in. The heat has made his nose bleed so violently, that he cannot be ready for dinner, but will be at Pentre for the ball, Ma'am, my master says."

"Very well; I shall be ready in a few moments."

Freda rose from her chair, and went to her dressing-table. There was a bottle of Eau-de-Cologne on it. She poured out nearly half a

wine-glassful, added water, and drank the dose. Then she dashed a quantity over her forehead; wetted her handkerchief with more, and having nearly exhausted the bottle, prepared to leave the room. Suddenly she stopped, exclaiming—

"I cannot go! I feel as if I must faint; yet I must see the farce played out."

A bitter smile, almost ghastly, passed over her face, as she muttered these words. She took up a splendid bouquet of greenhouse flowers that had been prepared for her, and were placed on the table, almost mechanically, and looking like one in a dream, left the room.

"It is half-past six, Freda," said Mr. Gwynne, in the loudest tone of which his voice was capable, as he descended the stairs.

The servants remarked to one another how very ill Miss Gwynne was looking, but her father did not perceive it. He was talking of Colonel Vaughan.

"So provoking of Vaughan, to go and tire himself in the heat, and make his nose bleed, and all that sort of thing.

Freda did not answer. Her thoughts were running wild—here, there, and every where.

One moment, she believed that Gladys had been romancing for some purpose of her own; the next, that all she said was true. Then she felt sure that Colonel Vaughan must really love Gladys, and must mean all that he said; and a cold shudder crept over her, as she became aware how much she loved him. Again, she knew that a man of his position could only be trifling with a girl in her's, and was ready to hate and despise one who could be so vile. As she thought, and thought, she grew paler and paler—colder and colder; and when she entered Lady Mary Nugent's drawing-room, that lady said—

"My dear Freda, what is the matter? You look so ill, and feel so cold."

"Nothing but the heat. It always has this enervating effect on me," was the answer.

The absence of Colonel Vaughan set the shrewd Lady Mary guessing as to the real cause of the sudden indisposition; she felt sure that something must have passed between him and Freda more exciting than usual to occasion such paleness.

At dinner, Freda was fortunate in being

placed next Sir Hugh Pryse, who knew her too well, and was far too fond of her, to make any personal remarks.

Miss Nugent's uncle, Lord Nugent, was the master of the ceremonies for the evening. He had come, as Miss Nugent's guardian, to resign his office, and to be present at her attaining her majority. Freda had once met him before, and liked him. He was now particularly friendly in his manner to her, but when he spoke to her across one intermediate person, she could only answer him in monosyllables. Every one silently remarked her absence of mind and unusual frigidity.

When the dinner was over, of which Freda only remembered that she had had certain viands placed before her, and when the ladies were leaving the dining-room, Colonel Vaughan's voice was heard in the hall. Lady Mary told a servant to show him into the dining-room; and as Freda was crossing the hall, she saw him at the opposite end of it. She hurried into the drawing-room, but was keenly alive to what passed in the hall after she had done so. She heard him, with his usual courtly manner, apo-

logise to Lady Mary Nugent for his non-appearance at the dinner-table, and attribute his accident to his having stood so long on her lawn, in the heat, watching the poor people at their dinner. He added that he was glad to have arrived in time to drink Miss Nugent's health, and proceeded to the dining-room.

Freda did her best to talk to the few, and very select, ladies, who had been honoured by an invitation to dinner; and felt intense relief when, one after another, all the evening-party arrived.

Dancing soon began, and Freda saw Colonel Vaughan and Miss Nugent together in a quadrille. Sir Hugh had asked her to dance with him, but she begged him to let her sit down that first dance, and promised him the next.

Of course she watched the pair in whom she was most interested. She was obliged to confess that Miss Nugent was the handsomest, most elegant, and best dressed girl in the room; as she talked to Colonel Vaughan, she looked almost animated; and he, on his part, seemed as gay and perfectly at his ease, as if there had never been a Gladys in the world. They were,

unquestionably, a fine, aristocratic couple; danced well, walked well, and to all appearance, were well pleased with one another. Lady Mary Nugent watched them quite as narrowly as Freda.

Sick at heart, Freda danced the next dance with Sir Hugh, and managed to avoid coming in contact with Colonel Vaughan, who had secured Lady Mary as his partner. Once or twice, however, Freda caught his keen, searching glance fixed upon her, and knew that he was trying to read her mind, as he had often done before.

It was useless for her to try to avoid him, as he came direct to her to ask her for the next dance. She longed to say that she would never dance with him again, but even she had tact enough to know that it would not do to refuse, for the sake of the effect such a refusal might have, both on him and the world. All she could do, however, was to bow her consent, take his arm, and walk, pale, silent, and stately, to the top of a quadrille. They had met Sir Hugh and Miss Nugent, and Colonel Vaughan had secured them as *vis-à-vis ;* for once his tact

had failed him, he could not have managed worse.

Freda tried to answer his questions, but in vain; she could not be hypocrite enough to treat him as she was accustomed to do. In him there was no perceptible change; she once fancied she perceived an uneasy expression in his face, as he looked at her, but his manner was friendly, lively, fascinating as ever; he even asked her what was the matter, and said she looked ill. Her answer was contained in the few sarcastic words,

"The heat. I hear you have suffered from it also."

Although Freda could not, herself, enter into the conversation, she could observe the by play between the Colonel and Miss Nugent; the bashful, simpering smiles of the young lady, the flattering glances of the gentleman. She would not have believed, when she awoke that morning, that it was possible to endure so much real suffering as she was enduring, in the short space of one quadrille.

It was over at last, and Colonel Vaughan led her to a seat amongst some ladies. She said

she would go to her father, when she saw that he was going to sit down by her side. He offered her his arm again, and took her to the drawing-room ; here she found her father, somewhat apart from the rest of the company, talking to Lady Mary Nugent, or more properly being talked to by her. She sat down on a sofa near her father, and bowing statelily to Colonel Vaughan, said,

"I will not detain you. I shall remain here for the present."

He made some passing observation to Mr. Gwynne, and returned to the drawing-room, followed shortly after by Lady Mary.

Sir Hugh came up, and began talking to Freda ; he was so kind and so natural even in his loudness, that Freda felt as if she would rather trust him with every secret of her heart, than the polished worldling who had just left her.

"And yet, perhaps," she thought, "Gladys has really deceived me, and he is innocent ; still, better Gladys, than that statue-like Miss Nugent."

Freda thought the night would never end ;

she exerted herself to talk and dance, because everyone came to ask what was the matter with her, and by the time they went to supper, she was as flushed as she had previously been pale. Lord Nugent was particularly attentive to her, and evidently admired her very much; bitterly she thought that she could gain, unsought, the civilities of one man, whilst she was but too conscious that the one she cared the most for in the world, was devoting himself almost exclusively to the Nugents. But he was unworthy of the heart of any right-minded woman, so she would tear him from hers, and again make her father her first care.

But those despicable Nugents had got possession of him also. He was seated next to Lady Mary at supper, her profile and diamonds were directed at him, and she looked almost as young, and quite as handsome as her daughter. Alas! and again alas! poor Freda!

However, all things come to an end, and an heiress's twenty-first birthday amongst them. Miss Nugent's did not finish till three o'clock in the morning, at which hour, Mr. and Miss Gwynne, and Colonel Vaughan, were driving

home from the festivities at Pentre. The gentlemen were keeping up a rather lively conversation on the events of the evening, and the lady was sustaining a very strong conflict with her own pride.

As the carriage rolled past a certain large oak tree in the park, Freda suddenly remembered Rowland Prothero. About a twelvemonth ago, she had left him beneath that oak, humbled and deeply pained, doubtless, by her haughty words. Now she was similarly pained and humbled, and she was, for the first time, aware of the shock her proud refusal of his love must have been to him. Had she not been weak enough to yield her heart unasked, and was it not almost thrown back into her own bosom? She, who had believed herself above the silly romance of her sex, to have sunk below even Miss Nugent. But she would rouse herself from such a mania, and show Colonel Vaughan how thoroughly she despised him.

She did rouse herself, and the first words she heard were,

"Yes, certainly, very handsome, mother and daughter," from Colonel Vaughan's lips.

"And which is to be the happy object of your notice, Colonel Vaughan?" she asked, suddenly joining in the conversation, "I heard grand discussions on the subject on all sides."

"Really," replied the Colonel, somewhat surprised by the sudden question, "I did not know I was of so much importance."

"What! you, about whom every one is speculating."

"Freda, my dear, I am so glad you are able to speak. I thought you so—ill, dull, unlike yourself, and all that sort of thing."

"Thanks, papa, I was thoroughly overpowered by the heat; but this delightful breeze has refreshed me. I hope, Colonel Vaughan, you, also have got over your weakness. I wonder you ever returned alive from India, if such a day as this was sufficient to upset you."

Further sarcasm was cut short by their reaching the house, for which Freda was very thankful, at a later period, feeling that she lowered her dignity by allowing herself to allude, however covertly, to Gladys or Miss Nugent. But she was scarcely herself when she did so.

Colonel Vaughan was going to help her out of the carriage, but she passed quickly up the steps, without touching his arm.

He had felt her lash, and now fully understood that she knew of his meeting with Gladys, and guessed that she had designs upon Miss Nugent, or her fortune. For once in his life he felt somewhat abashed, as he suddenly met the eye of the pale, haughty girl, whom he really admired twenty times as much as Miss Nugent, or any other young lady of his then devotees. And he admired her still more, as she kissed her father's cheek, nodded a haughty "good night" to himself, and went up-stairs to her room in the haste of strong excitement.

As soon as she was gone, Colonel Vaughan told Mr. Gwynne that he had promised Sir Hugh Pryse to go and spend a week with him, and that he should leave Glanaravon for that purpose, on the morrow.

"You will come back again of course," said Mr. Gwynne.

"Oh yes, certainly! but I have only ten

days more leave, and then I must bid you all good bye again."

"I am so sorry, and so will be Freda when she hears it. What could have been the matter with Freda to-night, I never saw her so odd? But I suppose it was the heat, and all that sort of thing; good night. I am tired to death, though it was a charming party, certainly a charming party."

END OF VOL. II.

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